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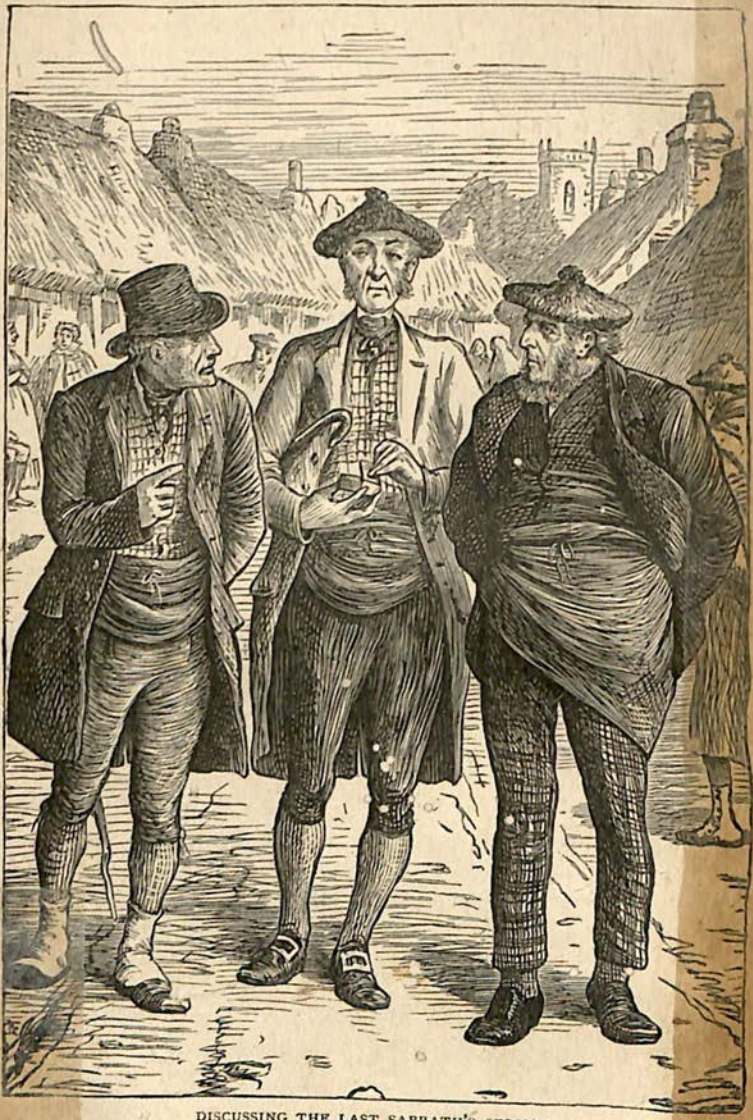

DISCUSSING THE LAST SABBATH'S SERMON.

DAFT DAVIE

AND OTHER SKETCHES OF

SCOTTISH LIFE AND CHARACTER

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DAFT DAVIE.

CHAPTER I.

DISCUSSING THE LAST SABBATH'S SERMON.

LIGHTBURN, at the period of which I write, was an unpretending country village on the highway to a flourishing manufacturing town. It was of the usual order of Scotch villages, built of stone and plastered with rough lime, whose original white was transformed by age into a dusky grey, stained here and there with green from the droppings from the thatch in rainy weather. It was sluttish and uninteresting, and occasionally, when the open drain which lay by the footpath in front of the houses was choked up, not particularly odoriferous. But there were no signs of poverty about the place; the children that swarmed about the doors, though bare-footed, dirty, and unkempt, were sufficiently clad and evidently well fed; and the parents were, with few exceptions, "decent

folk," and regular kirk-goers. A pious, devoted clergyman had laboured in the parish for nearly thirty years, and had made his impress upon it; and most individuals had at least the "form of godliness" if they had not realized its "power." So much was this the case that there was but one public-house in the village; and its custom depended more on passing travellers than on the inhabitants, and which sold more ale than whisky. Mr. Geddes, the clergyman, could not make his appearance in the village—the manse and church were in the Kirkhill, a quarter of a mile from it, where was a small cluster of houses, the original "toun" of the parish—without being greeted with such tokens of kindly reverence as spoke well for the moral tone of the place.

Not that there was unbroken ecclesiastical harmony in it; for a few Original Seceders had early taken root in the parish, having, by the assistance of wealthy members of that body at a distance, reared for themselves a small tabernacle, and who loudly vaunted their Mr. Gabriel McLuckie, a much-suffering man, whom they half starved and wholly governed, in contrast to the

parish minister, who was a sound Gospel preacher, but no Boanerges or pulpit orator. But, fortunately, the tabernacle had been built on the borders of the parish, so as conveniently to absorb into itself whatever of Dissent might exist not only in it but in the neighbouring one; and worthy Mr. Geddes suffered less annoyance from it than he might have done if it had been a nearer neighbour of the parish kirk. He and Mr. McLuckie were on friendly terms—as much so, at least, as the latter's jealous flock would permit, who in those days regarded civilities between a minister of that Kirk from which their fathers had seceded and their own pastor as a compromising of principles and a bowing down in the house of Rimmon. For, as is well known, the fewer the adherents of any religious body—and the seceders among us gained no new members, and death was gradually thinning them—the more narrow and exclusive do their views become.

The village of Lightburn consisted of a double and unbroken row of the cottages I have described, which were principally tenanted by weavers; for our story took place in the days of handloom

weaving, and when men could make a comfortable livelihood by the trade. There was an unceasing click from the numerous shuttles in operation as one passed through the village during the working time of the day, supplemented by the low hum of the women's winders as they got ready the "pirns" of thread for their husbands and sons. Many of the young women were weavers themselves.

The dwelling-place in these cottages was on one side of the narrow-flagged house passage, and the shop, containing generally several looms—a loom-stance being often sublet by the householder—was on the other. The passage ran the whole depth of the house, and had its back door as well as its front. The former stood always open, except in peculiarly inclement weather and at night, and led into the kail-yard; but which, though so denominated, had also its potato patch and onion bed, and in some cases its plants of southernwood and mint, pinks and marigolds. The flower cultivators, however, were decidedly exceptional, for the villagers were more inclined to prize the useful than the ornamental, though a balsam or similar delicate plant, for which the weaving atmosphere

was suited, might occasionally be seen in a shop window. These gardens or kail-yards were separated from each other by low thorn hedges, whose numerous gaps were filled up with unbarked wooden stobs or even withered furze; and on washing days these hedges were covered by the family garments spread on them for drying purposes.

These cottages, though united, were here and there unequal in height and general appearance. Not that any of them possessed the importance of a second story; but the few better ones, owing to the superior elevation of their walls, had two low-roofed and very campceiled garrets beneath the thatch, each lighted by a small projecting window of coarse greenish glass. The occupier was generally also the proprietor of these cottages, and was respected by his more humble neighbours as being "his own laird."

In addition to the public-house, there was a shop, or, rather, store, in the village; what was the weaving end in other cottages being here appropriated to the purposes of trade. Everything was sold in it, from sickles and spades, to tea and sugar

and wheaten bread; the latter being delivered at the store by the carrier, whose canvas covered cart plied sluggishly twice a week between the large town and a small one some twelve miles apart, Lightburn being about equally distant from each. None but the better class of its population indulged in "baker's bread," and these only for their Sunday tea or some special occasion. Porridge and milk morning and evening, and broth and potatoes for dinner, was the usual diet of these working people; and it could not be denied that they throve upon it; for though weaving is not considered a healthy occupation on account of the sedentary habits it induces, the weavers of Lightburn were a healthy race.

They did not neglect exercise, however,—which might account for it; for when the universal introduction of machinery into spinning-mills reduced the profits of handloom weavers, a change took place in this habit from their grudging the time bestowed on it, and physical degeneration quickly followed. A worse change was visible in the next generation—a moral one. Their fathers had been a God-fearing, ordinance-prizing race of men; the

sons grew up careless, intemperate, and scoffing. Bible-reading and the Shorter Catechism were exchanged for Paine's and other infidel publications, and family worship became almost unknown in the village. The origin of the evil was, undoubtedly, the difficulty which they more and more experienced in procuring constant employment in the only trade they knew, and, indeed, were physically fit for. They could not afford to purchase decent clothes for Sabbath; fell out of attendance at church; were a trial to Mr. Geddes' successor; till at length most of the weavers of Lightburn drifted away to the manufacturing towns, and were lost sight of there. But that was long subsequent to the date of my story.

In their prosperous days, as I have said, the weavers did not neglect daily exercise. Morning and evening the fathers of the village, girt with green woollen aprons, to which thrums betokening their trade were constantly sticking, might be seen at the same hour taking a moderate "constitutional" in groups, but more generally in pairs, discussing, it may be, the last Sabbath's sermon, or the latest political news that had reached the

village; while the lads and younger men played in cold weather at ball or shinty, and in summer strolled together down the "braes," as a narrow glen, inclosed by grassy hills on either side, and near to the village, was called. On one of the slopes of this glen was a spring of very pure cold water, which was considered better for drinking than that of the village well, and the young women would also flock to supply their families with it at the same seasons of the day, which, of course, resulted in much rustic coquetting and relieving of burdens. Weavers though they were, instead of swains and shepherdesses, to watch these young people—the girls attired in the old picturesque dress of the peasantry of Scotland—winding up the narrow rocky pathway bearing their rude water pitchers, while the glen resounded with their talk and merriment, was to realize a scene as truly pastoral in its features as either poet or painter has ever delineated.

The lower end of this glen terminated in a ridge of rocks on the farther side. Above this height was the kirk and kirkyard, and beyond them were the manse and Kirkhill village, the latter tenanted

principally by miners. A very steep road, first descending and then reascending across the mouth of the glen, lay between the two villages. The church was an old barn-like building, in the midst of a tree-surrounded graveyard, whose monumental stones might be seen from the glen below peering over the rocks; and the manse was in keeping with the kirk. But there did worthy Mr. Geddes and his middle-aged sister, Miss Janet, live in peaceful content. The small, old-fashioned rooms were large enough for them, their two staid maidservants, and the occasional stranger within their gates.

The weavers did not constitute the whole population of Lightburn. Besides the shopkeeper and publican, it had its souter, or cobbler, for he mended more shoes than he made; and its tailor, who, when he had not sufficient work at home, would itinerate among the numerous farmhouses around, making or turning clothes, and even patching them when rents and thin places went beyond the gude wife's skill or material to mend. Then there was the "doctor," as the people called him, though his only claim to the title was his having been in his

early years errand boy, and afterwards assistant in the dispensary of a medical man in the neighbouring city, where he picked up some knowledge of drugs, and learnt the art of cupping and bleeding. Turnbull was frugal and saving, and at the end of middle life was able to retire to his native village on a modest competence, for a little money went a great way in those simpler days. There was no medical man then in the parish; but the people could not have held old Turnbull's skill in higher respect if he had belonged to the faculty. His favourite prescription was Glauber salts; and he drove a lucrative trade every spring by phlebotomizing half of the population of the district, it being a notion among country folks at that time that nature required periodical depletion. The "doctor's" domicile was as humble as that of his neighbours, consisting of a single apartment, with bed-closet adjoining; and he did his cleaning, washing, and cooking himself, having neither wife nor child. He was a religious man, and a grave authority on all points of disputed doctrine; moreover, he was a leading member in Mr. McLuckie's tabernacle.

There were also the blacksmith and carpenter, each of whom carried on his trade at opposite ends of the village, or rather in the suburbs of it; for their dwelling-houses and working premises, though adjacent, were yet separate and distinct from it. The carpenter was undoubtedly the principal man of the place. He was known to have made money, though to what amount none could say. His house and workshop were his own property, and being a first-class workman, he had almost more business than he and his journeymen could execute.

His house and premises had the comfortable look that denotes the thriving tradesman. They were some short distance apart from the last house of the village on that side. On the right hand in the yard was the sawpit, and a goodly range of sawn planks seasoning for use; on the other, the workshop, built of brick, with windows pieced with all varieties of glass in size and shape. A glance through the open door showed a mass of shavings and all the tokens of an energetic and prosperous trade. The dwelling-house stood considerably back in this workyard, and completely out of the

line of the village. It was only one story in height; but storm windows of the carpenter's own devising and executing had made two excellent garret rooms in the roof, which was slated—a distinction in the village. All about the house, from the green-painted door, with its bright brass knocker and whitened step beneath, to the tidy water barrel in the little yard behind out of sight, was orderly and in the best repair, as everything belonging to James Warrander was likely to be. And it is with this house and its inhabitants, pertaining to and yet separate from the village of Lightburn, that my story has to do.

James Warrander had been the son of a farmer in the parish. Even in his boyhood he was noted for unusual steadiness and intelligence, united, however, to a cold, reserved, and unsocial nature, which rendered him indifferent to the society of companions of his own age. It showed itself, indeed, towards his own family as well as to others. He was not sullen or ill-tempered at home, however, though he exhibited little attachment to any one there; and he never disputed his parents' commands; so that, when censured in his absence by

his brothers and sister for his unkindly ways, the father once remarked that "if Jamie cared less than some for his friends, he would never cost them a wet eye by his undutifulness."

His father's was professedly and markedly, even in that time, a Christian household. A revival of religion had taken place in the parish many years previously; and its effects were still visible in the family life, especially of the rural population whose fathers had partaken of the blessing. It was a religion of a severe and somewhat gloomy type, however. Strict attention was enforced to all private and social religious duties, such as would now create discontent and even rebellion in families; but which, so respected then was a parent's authority, no one thought of disputing. There was domestic worship twice a day, at which every one was expected to be present, unless prevented by illness; constant attendance upon public ordinances on Sabbaths and sacramental preparation and thanksgiving days, in all weathers, was insisted on; and the head of the family never failed to catechise the assembled household, including wife, children, and servants, from the Shorter Catechism,

and on what they had heard at church, on the evening of the sacred day, the younger children alone being exempted. And woe to the unfortunate individual, whether child or servant, or even the wife of his bosom, whose defective and hesitating answers showed the "gudeman" that there had been a wandering mind while sitting under the preaching of the Word! The solemn and stern rebuke administered would cover the culprit with shame and confusion.

In such families also there was great confidence in the saying of Solomon, that "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him;" and certainly the rod was not spared.

Under this severe, though, perhaps, wholesome discipline, considering the rugged endurance of the race and the simplicity of the time, did James Warrander pass his childhood and early youth. The danger was of being moulded by it into the outward form and intellectual knowledge of religion while destitute of its spirit—of substituting faith in dogma for faith in a living and personal Christ. It had its advantages, however; it trained the young

into habits of sobriety and reverence, and was a check to many temptations in after-life.

James Warrander had no turn for agricultural pursuits, and, at his own desire, was early bound apprentice to a house carpenter and wheelwright. It was his true vocation; and when his apprenticeship came to an end, he established himself in business at Lightburn, where, so steady and skilful a workman he proved himself, trade soon flowed in upon him. He married, ere many years had passed, and before he was thirty, the daughter of a farmer in the parish, who had recently died, leaving her a portion of one hundred pounds. That the possession of this sum had much to do with his choice of a wife, or his taking one at all, no one could doubt, for James Warrander had always shown himself profoundly indifferent to the society of women, avoiding their company when he could; and it was the opinion of the whole parish that if Jeanie Gemmell had been portionless, James Warrander would never have looked her "aîrt."

Not that there was anything about poor Jeanie to make it a wonder that she should be sought in

marriage. She was of slight make, rather under than above the middle size, with a meek, simple, but not uncomely face. Her figure and face did not positively suggest ill-health, only a certain feebleness and want of stamina both in her physical and mental constitution. It was, indeed, a common saying in the parish that "none of the Gemmells had ever been the wale of the country-side for wisdom." But they were decent, creditable people, all allowed; and that no worse thing could be said against Jeanie than that she had little to say either as maid or wife—a considerable fault with those who loved a gossip—and that "she kent little mair than how to read her Bible, and to keep a house clean."

She, indeed, knew the latter thoroughly; and well for her it was so, for her husband was a man who would suffer no disorder or confusion to reign in the dwelling where he was master. Master he was there as certainly as in his workshop, and his wife was the most submissive and humble of his servants. His will was her law, and was never opposed by her on any occasion. She had, doubtless, more respect and fear for him than affection;

but she was too simple, tender-hearted, and self-depreciating a woman not to have some for him, were it but that he was the father of her son. There had been little of the usual attentions of courtship between them; but he had asked her in marriage: he was a religious man, she believed, which was the greatest of recommendations in her eyes, and all her friends strongly advised her to take him; therefore she took him, and he made her not an unkind husband. She never thought herself on an equality with him; and she held his wisdom and book knowledge—for James Warrander was a reader—in profound veneration. To her he was always "our Mr. Jeames;" and as she only spoke of him by that name, it became at length a sort of private nickname among the villagers when speaking of the carpenter, though they never ventured to use it in his presence.

James Warrander was more respected than liked in the village. He was civil to his neighbours when he met them; but he avoided their company when he could. He never entered their houses, or admitted them into his, but on occasions of business; and these did not often occur, for he kept

himself clear from all village disputes. He was a self-concentrated man, wholly occupied with his own concerns, and though firm and decided in his opinions, indifferent as to impressing them upon others. Whatever work he undertook he did conscientiously. He listened attentively to his employer's directions, put the few necessary questions as briefly as possible, and then went silently and steadily about the work till its completion. His materials and workmanship could always be trusted; so could his punctuality. To his workmen he was a just, though strict, master, and his word was at all times as good as his bond. But he was hard, unsympathising, and ungenial. He had that want of compassion for poverty and inertness of character which strong-willed, energetic men, who have fought their own way upward unaided, are apt to have. He was not ready to give alms, though when cases of illness appeared in the village, and especially when the industrious head of a young family was prostrated by it, he could give even liberally. A professed beggar was his abhorrence, and none such were allowed to be relieved at his house.

He was considered a religious man. His youth had been free from vice; and when he became the head of a household he followed his father's example of keeping up family worship in it; and he was a steady attendant upon religious ordinances. He had never questioned his own Christianity, nor had his minister. Indeed, Mr. Geddes had more than once proposed to him to allow himself to be nominated for the eldership, but had failed, James alleging, in excuse, not his unfitness, but his inability to find time to discharge the office effectually. It would also have necessitated an intercourse with others that was uncongenial to his reserved nature.

There was one man in Lightburn, however, who was less satisfied with the religious state of the carpenter than was the minister. This was his nearest neighbour, an elder and Sabbath-school teacher, whose Christian experience and judgment were deeper and clearer than his pastor's, whom he yet loved and reverenced as truly a man of God. He was a weaver, and in comfortable circumstances, being the proprietor as well as tenant of his house, and letting three loom-stances; for

Thomas Lowrie and his wife had no family. He was held in great respect in the village, where most of the younger population had been under his religious tuition, while his visits were frequent to the old and sick. "Them that honour Me, I will honour," saith God; and this promise was fulfilled in the case of Thomas Lowrie. To him his neighbours had recourse in all their troubles—sure of sympathy and good counsel; but whatever advice he gave, he never failed to drop in the seed of the Word at the same time. Thomas had little more intercourse than others with his neighbour the carpenter, for he would not intrude himself where he felt his company was not desired; yet he saw enough of him to know that there was no real Christian fellowship between them.

"I'm fear't, Mary," he said to his likeminded wife one evening, after sitting thoughtfully for some time by the fireside, "I'm fear't that James Warrander's religion has been a' taught him by man, and not by the Holy Ghost. I'm sair troubled about that man, Mary; mair troubled, I doubt, than he has ever been for himsell. As weel as I can judge, he has never kent, for a' his knowledge,

what it is to be humbled and broken in spirit, though he has had what might hae done it; but I think it has only made him prouder and harder baith to God and man without his suspectin' it."

"Ay, ay, puir man!" ejaculated his wife, shaking her head significantly.

"I met him just turning into his yard the now," continued Thomas, in a distressed voice, "and I stopped and spoke to him, as I canna bear passing a neebor without a kindly word. But as we were speaking, puir Davie came stealing out from the back o' the house, chucklin' and swingin' himsell frae the tae side to the tither, as his way is; and eh, sirs! what a black, gruesome look came ower the faither's face as he saw him. He scarcely bade me gude nicht, and awa he went, driving the puir thing roughly before him into the house, and then steeking the door upon him, as if he had been a messan dog. Oh, woman, it went to my very heart to see it! It's a sair trial, nae doubt—I'm no makin' light o' it—but it's o' the Lord's sending, and it should soften a man instead o' harden him."

"Atweel should it, gudeman," said Mary

"I'm sorry for the mither—puir Jeanie Gemmell," added Thomas, after a pause. "I mind her weel at the Sabbath-school the first year I helped Mr. Galloway wi' it. She was in my class, and I couldna help noticing her. She was a quate timorsome thing, no half sae ready wi' her answers as some; but yet somehow I thought that the truth had taken haud o' her. I mind once when I was talkin' to the bairns o' the love o' Christ and His willingness to receive sinners, and what a blessed thing it was when folk kent Him in their young days, for then they might hae a lang life to serve Him in, instead o' mere thrums and remnants o' time for 't, when I happened to look at Jeanie, and I saw her een glistening wi' tears. I meant to speak to her at the close, but she slippit awa', and I never got an opportunity; though she was so regular in attending the school, she was sae shy and backward. But she was one o' the 'weak things o' the world that confound the things that are mighty,' I doubt not. She would be a lassie a' twal years auld then, sae she maun be a woman o' five-and-forty now; and Davie canna be less than one-and-twenty. I dinna think James War-

rander would use her ill—he's ower just a man for that; but he will show her little kindness, I fear, and she would need it, puir thing. They say she never lets Davie be mair in his faither's sight than she can help, but keeps him either in the house or the back-yard, and we a' ken what that means."

"A heavy heart and a troubled mind for a mither," said Mary, wiping her eyes with her checked apron. "Onybody that ever put een on her and the puir natural thegither would see that. But she's a godly woman, I'm sure, though she's weak, puir thing—weak."

Yes, this was "the dead fly in the ointment of the apothecary" that tainted it all; this was the cloud that rested on the dwelling of the thriving tradesman, and darkened its prosperity—his only child was an idiot. Heavy trial to any parent; but peculiarly heavy to a proud, reserved, self-sufficing nature, which rejects sympathy, and at the same time cannot hide its disgrace from the observation of others. He felt it to be a disgrace; and though from the time it became a certainty to him, which was only when the strange, unteachable boy grew into the hopelessly and unmistakably

fatuous lad, he had set himself sternly and resolutely to endure the trial, it was not the less a trial to him. He spoke of it to no man; but it blighted his life to him. Promising children surrounding a cheerful fireside might have softened his temper and developed his affection; but instead of this, there were but the restless, chuckling, uncouth idiot in the opposite chimney-corner, and his quiet timid handmaiden of a wife between them. He had married her at the outset of life for the sake of that hundred pounds, which now, after upwards of twenty years of prosperity, was an insignificant sum in his eyes. The idiot he regarded as more her son than his—a Gemmell, though weaker in intellect than any Gemmell had ever been. But he was too righteous a man—too religious according to the letter—to say to a woman, unless under the excitement of overpowering passion, which had not as yet happened, "What hast thou brought forth?" He spoke no reproach to his wife; he was resolute to bear his affliction uncomplainingly; but as years went on he grew sterner, more silent and masterful in his own family and workshop, and more unsocial in public.

As regards the idiot, it was as the neighbours said; the poor mother, who clung to her uncouth offspring as only a mother can, kept him as much as possible out of her husband's sight. Her maternal instinct caused her to divine his feelings, though not their full extent, for James Warrander absolutely loathed his son; and except in the evenings, when Davie would not be kept away from the fire, the father was little troubled with his presence. She fed him apart,—which, indeed, his rude manner of eating rendered almost necessary; and she was ever on the watch that Davie, who was fond of getting into the work-yard to listen to the noise the wind made among the sawn timber, should not leave the back premises, where he was concealed from sight.

The poor harmless idiot followed her up and down like a two-year-old child; and if he lost sight of her in the house for more than a few minutes, his whimpering call of "mither, mither" would immediately resound over it. He was "my Davie, my bonny Davie" always with her, and she would often pause in her work to fondle and caress him. In person he was sparely made and of

middle stature; but he had a habit of walking with his hands loosely interlaced behind his back, which induced a stoop, and took from his height. In face he resembled his mother; though what was but an expression of nervous weakness in hers became the vacant, wandering, dreamy look of idiocy in his. He spoke seldom, but chuckled often to himself.

Who can tell what ambitious projects may have passed through his father's brain for this son as he lay a baby on his mother's knee?

CHAPTER II.

DAFT DAVIE RESCUED FROM HIS TORMENTORS.

"DAFT DAVIE! Daft Davie! Daft Davie!" The shrill outcries of the children ran through the village again and again, higher and higher, till they brought more than one curious individual of both sexes to their outer doors to learn the meaning of them, which the sight of Davie Warrander, advancing down the street, sufficiently explained. Their "Fie! for shames," and "Let the puir thing alanes!" were all unheeded by the eager juveniles; and the seniors saw no occasion for interfering further—at least as yet, the carpenter being no favourite in the village—while they indulged their own curiosity and commented to each other on its object, whom few of them were familiar with, so carefully had Davie been kept out of sight, especially since he had attained to manhood.

Davie Warrander, in his father's absence that forenoon, which he was cunning enough to discover, had contrived to elude his mother's relaxed watchfulness, who thought him safe in the small garden stringing gowans on the green; and slipping from the workyard, was making his way slowly down the village, chuckling and rejoicing in his unusual freedom. His strange aspect and gestures soon attracted round him all the idle youngsters of the place, for it was the holiday time, and the parish school was closed for a season. It was not often they got more than a passing glimpse of "the idiot," as he sometimes peeped round the corner of his father's house into the forbidden workyard, though they watched well for the purpose behind the hedge that partly surrounded the carpenter's premises; and therefore the mischievous imps greatly enjoyed this unexpected opportunity of observing Davie.

Davie came leisurely along the street, swinging his lank body from side to side, his fidgeting fingers interlaced as usual behind his back, and regarding the houses and faces in the doorways with wondering lack-lustre eyes. He sometimes

talked to himself, though not audibly; but when the shouts of his increasing escort—for every child within doors speedily joined the group without—waxed more vociferous, and they began to press nearer to him, he would occasionally pause and look stupidly at them, laughing his foolish laugh, then resume his swinging walk, as if heedless of their presence and outcries. They soon wearied of mere shouting, however; and the bolder among them, as he drew near to the other end of the village, closing up around him, began to push against him and act so roughly that Davie grew bewildered and frightened.

"What's your name? I say, what's your name?" demanded his tormentors, hanging on his arms and by the skirts of his coat.

"It's Davie," said the poor imbecile.

"Davie what? Hae ye 'only half a name, Davie?"

"It's just Davie," replied the helpless victim, beginning to whimper and to cry on his mother.

"Whaur is she? what for did ye leave her? See what she'll say to ye, lad, when ye gang hame!" said his thoughtless persecutors, dancing in a ring

round the terrified Davie, whose fears only served to amuse them.

"Mither, mither! whaur are ye?" again cried the poor idiot, unaccustomed to anything but kindness till now.

"Bairns, I say, let the puir, silly thing alane," said a motherly-like, respectable woman, wife to the tailor, whom the increasing din now brought to her door just in time to see a shower of soft, ill-smelling mud from the stagnant gutter descend by means of a broken sherd, which chanced to be at hand, upon poor Davie's clean and well-kept apparel.

"Jock Renton, ye little blackguard!" she exclaimed, indignantly, "that was you—ye needna deny't—I saw ye do't. See if I dinna let your faither ken o' your behaviour, when he comes hame frae the toun wi' his wab. It's enough to bring down a judgment on ye a', sic treatment o' a puir innocent. Gae wa hame to your mither, my man" (to Davie), "and never venture oot here again. And as sure as I'm here, there's oor Tammie in the middle o' ye," she suddenly cried, darting into the centre of the youthful group, whom she rapidly

dispersed to the right and left, while she clutched under her strong arm her own offspring, a boy of eight years old, attired in an old pair of his father's corduroys made down to him, the under being buttoned to the upper part of the suit, just below the armpits, shaking him vigorously, and cuffing his touzy, sunbleached head, while he kicked and struggled ineffectually in her powerful grasp.

"Ye'll get a gude licking the night, my man; and before ye steer oot o' the door again ye'll learn the parable o' the Gude Samaritan by heart, to teach ye how ye ought to behave to your neebor," said his mother, preparing to cross over to her door with her now weeping burden.

"Daft Davie isna my neebor. He disna leeve beside me. Elder Lowrie and his wife are his neebors," blubbered the task-hating urchin, whose ideas concerning neighbours were as yet somewhat limited.

"Haud your tongue, ye little rascal!" with another shake. "D'ye think it's only stane and lime wa's that mak' neebors? A' the folk in the world, black and white thegither, are your neebors, if ye but kent it."

Which startling assertion opened up such a depth of speculation to Tammie's youthful imagination as effectually to silence him for the present.

Shaking her fist at the little crowd, who still hung around Davie, but at some distance, as if daring them to resume their persecution in her absence, the tailor's wife was about to re-enter her house.

"Weel done, Jenny!" said a green-aproned, "canny"-looking weaver, as he leant with folded arms against the side of a neighbouring doorway. "They are a set o' mischievous young getts, and ye did weel to set them aff the creature."

"And whaur were your haunds and feet, Peter Pirret," said the worthy woman, evidently indifferent to his commendation, "that ye couldna reskie the puir simple thing yoursell? I think a man body might feel shame to let a woman help while he looks on."

"I was just thinking aboot it," said canny Peter; "but, ye see, ye got before me."

"Ay, ay, Peter," said plain-speaking Jenny Telfer. "'He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.' Your wife kens if that's true."

And with a significant nod to the crest-fallen weaver, who was noted in the village for his laziness and want of thrift, Jenny disappeared within her own premises, shutting the door upon herself and the unlucky Tammie.

By this time Davie, who was at the extremity of the village when the mud was thrown upon him, was setting his face homeward, as Jenny had advised him. Her rebuke had not been without its effect upon the consciences of most of the children, whose behaviour had been the result of thoughtlessness rather than cruelty. Children are often unconsciously cruel in their actions; and, but for the influence of one or two bolder and less impressionable spirits, who led the rest, they would have contented themselves now with simply following Davie, and familiarizing themselves with his figure and gestures. But evil example is powerfully infectious, and the temptation to join the others in their heartless sport became at last stronger than the remonstrances of conscience. As long as there was a risk of Jenny Telfer returning, the mischievous leaders of the band that hung on his steps were afraid to raise their voices, or to indulge their

former personal assaults. But having attained the middle of the village, they thought themselves secure; they gathered closely round their victim once more; again the cry of "Daft Davie!" rose on the air, at first only from a few voices; but these were speedily reinforced by others, till all were in full cry, and the poor terrified imbecile, who resembled a hunted animal surrounded by dogs, began again to shed tears and to call on his mother.

Thomas Lowrie was busy at his loom when the first shouts reached his ear; but as they were confused by distance, and rendered indistinct also by the noise of three shuttles in full activity, he thought they were but the cries of the children in some rough play, and paid no heed to them. But as the band of urchins, with Davie in their midst, returned up the village, the sounds, which for a few minutes had ceased, were renewed, and began to arrange themselves into words:

"Daft Davie! Daft Davie! Daft Davie!"

"I saw James Warrander gang down the road this morning, as if on business," said the good

man to himself, as he hastily rose to leave the shop, "and the puir natural maun have got out and be amang thae wild bairns. I maun set them aff him, and take him hame to his mither or the faither is back."

But when he reached the door of his house he found, to his regret, that he was too late for the latter purpose. A man was walking hastily up the village street, whom he instantly recognised as the carpenter himself, and at sight of whom every looker-on at doors and windows became invisible, while the youthful mob dispersed in all directions, without venturing another glance, but peeping out of doorways and round corners, when they had gained these places of security. The village street became quiet and empty in a moment; but Thomas stood his ground. He had got a glimpse of the mother—poor Jeanie Gemmell, as he always called her—who must by this time have discovered her son's absence, peering out anxiously from the entrance of the work-yard, as if in search of him, but who, on catching sight of her husband approaching Davie, had suddenly disappeared; and his kind heart was grieved

at what probably awaited her, though how to interfere prudently he knew not.

James Warrander, on drawing near to the village, which was in a direct line with the road, had seen the crowd of children at some distance before him surrounding some uncouth-looking object, whom they were evidently harassing and making sport of, and whom, on more nearly approaching, to his shame and exceeding anger, he recognised as his own miserable offspring, while the cries of "Daft Davie!" rang again and again through his ears. He had to endure the sight and sounds for more than a minute—had full time to realize the fact that his son—his!—was being made a public spectacle of for the entertainment of the children and grown-up idlers of Lightburn, before he was observed by either lookers-on or actors, for the faces of both were turned away from him. A sudden, sternly uttered exclamation, which burst from him when only a few paces off, was the first thing that warned any one of his presence; and the startling effect followed which I have described.

Striding up to the wretched dirt-bespattered

object, who was now alone in the centre of the roadway, he grasped him fiercely by the upper portion of the arm, and, without a word, dragged him along with him towards his own dwelling. Thomas Lowrie was standing by his door as they approached, the father's countenance dark with suppressed passion, poor Davie terrified and unresisting, for he regarded "the man," as he always designated his father, with great fear.

"Oh, Mr. Warrander," said old Thomas, involuntarily stepping forward as they were abreast of him, and speaking in a pleading, deprecating tone to the dour man, who evidently wished to avoid him, for he quickened his pace—"Oh, Mr. Warrander, dinna be hard on him, he kens no better; it's the Lord Himsell who has seen meet to withhold reason from him."

"I hope I need no man to teach me my duty, Mr. Lowrie," was the stern answer he received. In another minute the father and son had turned into the workyard, and Thomas Lowrie went back to his loom with a heavy heart, and a fervent but unuttered prayer "that the Lord would help and comfort poor Jeanie in her affliction."

James Warrander did not relax his hold of the idiot till reaching his house-door, which his wife, in her hurried retreat, had left open behind her; he pushed him into the kitchen before him—as miserable, dirty, humbling an object as ever met a parent's reluctant eye. Jeanie was standing in the middle of the apartment, leaning for support against the table, with a white, terrified face, and shaking all over like one attacked with palsy. He took no notice of these symptoms of extreme terror; probably, in the excited state of his mind, he was not aware of them; but striding up to her, he fixed a strong grasp upon her shrinking shoulder.

"Woman," he briefly said, with flashing eyes, and in a low, stern voice which thrilled through every nerve of her sensitive frame, "that son o' yours—for he's yours and no mine, though I'm his father and maun bear the shame—has brought disgrace on me this day that I canna bear to think o'. If ever he gets out o' this yard again—mind what I say!"—painfully tightening his grasp of her shoulder to fix her attention on his words —"I'll have him shut up in a madhouse for the

rest of his life, though it should take a' I have in the world to keep him there."

Then, releasing her from his hold, he made for the door, closed it after him, and disappeared into his workshop.

"Oh, Davie, Davie, Davie—my ain Davie! for the Lord gave ye to me as ye are, and I'll never disown ye, my bairn, nor scorn ye, whatever others may do," murmured the poor heart-stricken woman, tottering over to where her son remained standing in his wretched plight, and throwing her shaking arms around him, regardless of it. She clung for some minutes almost wildly to him, as if she feared that even then the father might be purposing to separate him from her; uttering feeble cries, and shedding such a flood of hysterical tears that Davie, who had only a dim, confused notion that he had been doing wrong in going down the village, and that "the man" was angry with him and his mother because his clothes were dirty, tried in his own way to console her.

"We'll wash them, mither—we'll wash them in the bine in the back-yard, and he'll no see them," he whispered cunningly, pointing to-

wards the door through which his father had passed.

"Oh, ye dinna understand, Davie—ye dinna understand, my poor bairn!" cried the weeping mother, sinking into the nearest seat at length from exhaustion. "The Lord help you and me, and deliver us from this threatened judgment! Oh Davie, my bonny Davie, if ever ye gang out o' the yard again and get among these mocking bairns, and affront him as ye've done the day, he'll take and lock ye up, Davie, in an awfu' place, and they'll whup ye and starve ye, and never let ye see your mither again—for he'll keep his word, I ken he'll keep his word. My bairn, my bairn! O Lord, be merciful to a poor, weak, ignorant woman, that has nobody to look to but Thysell!"

"Oh, mither, come awa and hide me!" whimpered Davie, beginning to shiver all over at his mother's words, which yet he only partly comprehended.

"No the now, Davie—no the now—he'll no do it the now, my bairn," said she soothingly, seeing his terror; and she strove with her agitation lest it should increase it. "It's only if ye gang out

again—and ye'll no gang out, will ye, Davie? Ye'll keep in the back-yard and in the house beside me, and then nobody will meddle wi' ye—willna ye, Davie?"

"Ay, ay, mither."

"And ye'll keep out o' the man's sight up the stair the rest o' the day, and watch the birdies from the window, for he'll no like to see ye the day, Davie" (coaxingly), "till you're cleaned and made bonny again, ye ken?"

The poor woman was anxious to seclude him entirely from his father's sight till the irritation caused by the recent occurrence had somewhat subsided.

"Ay, ay, mither."

"Gang away up the stair then, and put on your auld things—they're in the green kist, ye ken—and I'll come up for the dirty anes, and bring ye your kail. They're fine kail the day, Davie, and ye'll lick your lips after them, I'll be bound, my bonnie Davie."

The poor imbecile listening to her, and anticipating his dinner, forgot his fears, began to chuckle and laugh as usual, and let her lead him to the

foot of the wooden stairs which mounted to the garrets. She stood still there, and he ascended, looking round upon her every few seconds, she nodding and smiling to him as to a child that needs encouragement, till he disappeared above.

And then the mother's face instantly changed. The smile died out of it, and the recent look of helpless distress and fear came back, and she returned to the kitchen wringing her hands, murmuring her apprehensions about Davie, interspersing them with broken ejaculations and appeals to heaven to protect him.

"He'll do it; I ken he'll do it when he has said it!" she exclaimed, despairingly. "And how is a poor weak woman like me, that has nobody to help me in the work of the house, to keep my een on Davie so that he'll never slip out? He'll mind what's happened only for a week or sae, but no longer, unless I frighten him as I did the now; and I canna bear to do that and make him miserable. Oh, the madhouse, the madhouse! if a' the stories they tell about it are true, what a place for my bairn! It'll come to it; I ken it'll come to it. It's our Mr. Jeames said it, and he never lees. It's

my fault, he says, that Davie isna quite like other folk; though he's more sense than they think, for he says his prayers and he talks to me o' God many a time; and no doubt it must be my fault, and no his, for he's a wise man. But I canna help it; I canna help it. The Lord guide and strengthen me, and turn our Mr. Jeames's heart to poor Davie!"

And sitting down, for she often needed to rest herself at this time, she continued to wring her hands and moan, and shed tears in a feeble, nervous manner for some minutes; but when these had elapsed, she suddenly started up like one who had forgotten something.

"Davie's dinner!" she exclaimed, for she had a habit of uttering her thoughts aloud, as is sometimes the case with solitary or weak-minded people; "if I am long o' taking it to him, he'll maybe come down the stair, and they'll meet—they'll meet—for Mr. Jeames will be expectin' to be called in to his dinner."

And with her thin, trembling, but labour-hardened hands she lifted the kail-pot down from the "crook" on which it hung to the side of the fire,

and ladled a goodly portion of the broth it contained into a bowl, adding to it a few mouthfuls of the meat it was made of. She then peeled some potatoes, for Davie would have eaten skins and all if she had left it to him, and hastily carried both upstairs to him.

Smiles were again on her poor anxious face, and coaxing and soothing words were on her lips, when she set down his dinner before him, while he chuckled and laughed at the sight of it. She stood watchfully beside him till, as she had trained him to do before partaking of his meals, he shut his eyes, and with the simple reverence of a child, though most unchildlike he was in outward appearance, he uttered this grace: "Lord, bless my meat, and make poor Davie good, for Jesus Christ's sake."

Perhaps poor fatuous Davie's prayer found acceptance with the God who had "made and fashioned" him, and could send a ray of spiritual light even into the darkness of his understanding.

His mother remained beside him for a few seconds after he began, voraciously and noisily, as was his habit, to cram the broth and meat into

his mouth by means of a horn spoon, while he held a potato in his left hand to be ready for an occasional bite; and then, picking up the dirty suit from the floor where he had left it, she charged Davie to remain where he was till he was made "braw" again, and hastened downstairs to arrange her husband's dinner.

She never took her meals with him now, except the Sunday tea, and that was taken at the same time and table in a humble, deprecating fashion, as if the necessity of superintending the teapot alone induced the familiarity. It had not been so during the early part of her married life; but the habit was now of long standing, ever, indeed, since Davie's fatuity had become decided, and her husband's character had grown still more unsocial and stern under its shadow. The timid and kindly woman felt an increasing but respectful fear of him, and gradually shrank back into the unresented position of mere domestic servitude, though continuing to share the same apartment.

He did not seem to observe the change in their domestic arrangements; but he did. It elicited no inquiry from him. It was a matter of indifference

in his mind; she might sit down at the board beside him if she liked, or she might stand near the table, but out of sight behind him, ready to supply his wants, if she preferred it. And she did prefer it. He made no objections; she could please herself. If they had kept a servant his pride would have interposed; but he would have no gossiping strangers within his unhappy dwelling. He had grudged his wife no comfort suitable to their position in life; and though often stern in manner, and always silent and reserved toward her, had never, till this unfortunate day, spoken harshly and reproachfully to her. It was he who had five hundred pence to forgive—not she—was his view. He did not feel that she had even thirty on her side to charge him with. And though his creed was opposed to it, in the inner depths of his heart a voice secretly addressed the Almighty: "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men—or as this woman!"

When she had placed his dinner on the table in the neat and orderly fashion which pleased him, she went to the workshop, and putting her head in at the open door, said, "Your dinner's ready."

Her husband answered as usual by a slight nod, without looking up from his work, and she returned to the house, followed almost immediately by him, for punctuality was a marked feature in his character. He made no allusion to what had occurred so shortly ago, said the customary grace, or "blessing," and proceeded to eat his food in silence. Silent he always was, yet he generally made some brief observations, or gave some directions about household matters during the meal; but none such were forthcoming this day. A cloud was still upon his brow, though the passion was gone; but his trembling wife in her humility, grateful that he did not further reproach her, thought she could not attend upon him too assiduously to atone for the annoyance which her negligence had exposed him to, and with the hope of propitiating him towards Davie.

And no allusion did James Warrander ever make to the fearful threat he had given utterance to in his passion, and which would often recur, bringing some of the first wild terror with it, to the memory of his wife.

The following day she observed him and one of

his men begin to fix a paling, breast high, at either side of the house. On one side the space between the house and the well-kept thick hedge which separated the carpenter's premises from a cross road that ran between them and the dwelling and garden of Thomas Lowrie was narrow, and a close paling was soon erected there; but on the other, the vacancy between the house wall and the boundary hedge was sufficiently wide to allow coals to be carted into the back-yard, and here a strong gate, so constructed as to offer serious difficulties to any attempt to climb it, was placed in the course of a day or two. A coat of green paint was then given to paling and gate, and the latter was secured on the outer side by a good padlock, of which James Warrander retained the key.

"It must be to keep Davie in," his wife considered with herself as she secretly watched the progress of the work till the whole was completed. Not a word was said by her husband to her as to the purpose of its erection, and she did not venture to inquire concerning it; but she guessed aright. The carpenter had determined that no such scene as had taken place that week in Lightburn through

Davie's escape from supervision should possibly occur again; therefore he fenced him in as in a prison, only it was an open-air one.

"Well, I'm thankful—I'm thankful!" murmured the poor mother in secret. "There will be little fear of the madhouse now, for Davie will only be able to get out to the road by the front door, and I'll keep it locked, and the key in my pouch. Davie would never think o' speeling out by a window—no, no. The Lord be thanked for putting the thought into our Mr. Jeames's heart, for it will give rest to mine."

CHAPTER III.

JENNY TELFER'S GOSSIP.

THE general shop in Lightburn had a steady though not lively trade. It did not much interrupt Mrs. Peacock's private and family business. The father and head of the house hired himself out as a working gardener, and, when not employed in this manner, as odd hand to any farmer who might require his assistance, leaving his wife to attend to the wants of the public. She could calculate pretty nearly the domestic requirements of all her neighbours, and knew when to expect their visits. To stand behind her little counter waiting for them would have produced family confusion and discomfort, without any pecuniary advantage to atone for it. Therefore, though the outer door stood wide open, as if to invite entrance, the shop one, which, as I have already intimated, was opposite to that of the

house place, was kept shut, and indeed locked, so that the customer—for there was seldom more than one at a time—had generally to summon the shop-mistress from her domestic labours in the kitchen to her public duties.

Then stripping the soap-suds from her arms, if it was washing day, and drying them on her drugget apron, or quitting any other occupation she might be engaged with at the moment, Mrs. Peacock would mount upon a chair, and lift the shop-key down from a nail high up on the wall—hung there out of reach of the children, or there might have been grievous deficiencies, she knew, in the stock of candy and liquorice (known in that countryside by the name of "sugar-ally"), if she happened to be absent at the village well for the ten minutes which were required to fill her pitchers and bear them home—and unlocking the shop-door, would usher her customer into the presence of the dangling handles, meal-sacks, straw-protected reaping-hooks and other miscellaneous articles that crowded roof, floor, and shelves. She would then cheerfully take her position behind the counter—for a purchase there necessarily implied a gossip—while the other

stationed herself on the outer side of it. Tobacco, pipes, and snuff would occasionally bring men as purchasers—at least tobacco and snuff, for a "cutty-pipe" was improved by use, they considered, and was preserved carefully—but their visits were few compared to those of the women, who had the domestic purveying in their hands.

Then the way of transacting business at Mrs. Peacock's shop was more leisurely and pleasant than in those places where competition exists, and time is valuable. Leaning comfortably with folded arms on the counter, the customer, while making her purchase, never failed to communicate or receive any news that might be stirring in the village or neighbourhood. In the latter case, the shopkeeper was generally the narrator, having more dealings with the country population. Farmers or their men would often stop their carts at Mrs. Peacock's door, to make some purchases for the "mistress"—candles and oil, a little tea and sugar perhaps, and even occasionally a loaf of bread (which required to be ordered beforehand, however)—while even the gentry and the inmates of the manse took bread and other articles from

the shop, though they got their groceries sent to them from town by the carrier, the village tea and sugar being hardly up to the mark of refined palates. The minister and Miss Janet, it was well known, loved a good cup of tea, and did not grudge the price of it, though plain in everything else.

The customer on the afternoon to which we wish to refer, and which was some days after Davie Warrander's appearance in the village, was the tailor's wife, Jenny Telfer, a notable and careful wife and mother, shrewd and observant withal, as was to be found in the parish; though people did not scruple to say that Watty Telfer, however independent and ready with his tongue (as tailors seem to have been from time immemorial) away from home, was henpecked there—indeed, was ruled as thoroughly by Jenny as was their only son and heir Tammie. For Jenny was a strict disciplinarian, and kept a domestic pair of tawse, of which Tammie knew well the stinging application. The "scourge of the tongue" was, of course, all that Jenny administered to her lawful head and husband, though undoubtedly his superior both in height and muscle, and then only

upon what she believed just and fitting occasions, such as setting an "ill example" to Tammie, by singing snatches when at work of what she considered were profane and ungodly ballads, about "masterful thieves and idle cutties," in the presence of the said Tammie, by whom they were eagerly drunk in, to the detriment of his morals and school lessons.

Watty had the wisdom of the serpent, if he did not quite possess the harmlessness of the dove, and usually received these conjugal admonitions in what seemed the spirit of contrition; though that may be considered doubtful, as, on more than one occasion when his wife had quitted the room after delivering her mind, he had not hesitated, with an arch twinkle of his eye as accompaniment, to hum over two lines of an old song about "ruling wives," that he evidently felt were appropriate to the circumstances.

But Watty knew well that she was a good wife to him; took care of his earnings; kept his house clean and comfortable, for a Scotchwoman of her class of life; and never let him appear in church without a shirt as well got up as the minister's:

moreover, she had a "stocking" gathered to meet the wants of an evil day, if such should come upon them. For Jenny's religion was decidedly practical, and she held in profound contempt those who spent all in their days of health and prosperity, and when the time of adversity came looked to Providence to interpose signally in their behalf. And she privately considered Watty, who was a steady, industrious man, as far superior to their lazy weaver neighbour, canny Peter Pirret, though that individual had a high opinion of himself.

"If a tailor's only the ninth part o' a man, as ye say," said Jenny, in great indignation at having this proverbial saying thrown in her teeth by the weaver on one occasion, "it's better than being no man at a', as yé are, Peter Pirret. I'm sorry for the woman ye belong to, and who has to keep both hersell and the bairns in parritch and claes—poor ragged things they are!—for it's weel known that ye only work enough to meat and cleed yersell. It would be telling you if ye were like my Watty, who keeps us a' bien and comfortable, and crooks his legs on his shop-board, while you stretch yours at the door-cheek, clavering with

onybody that will claver with ye. If I were the minister, I would have ye summoned before the session."

"And what for, woman?" said Peter, opening his dull, sleepy eyes in wonder.

"What for!" shrilly retorted Jenny. "What right have ye to be a member of a kirk, when ye habitually break the plainest precepts in the Scripture? It is written, 'If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house'—his wife and bairns, ye see—'he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' An infidel, Peter! Put that in your pouch, my man, and think about it the next time ye are tempted to miscall the tailors."

Watty had overheard every word while diligently plying his needle on his shop-board, for a chink of the window was open, and both doors were completely so. He really did not think that he himself could have put down the weaver more cleverly than Jenny had, and he chuckled over it for the rest of the day.

But we must now return to Mrs. Peacock's shop.

"How are ye the day, Mrs. Peacock?" said

Jenny, in friendly, leisurely tones, for it was her slack time of the day, and she could permit herself a little indulgence; "and how's the gudeman and the bairns?"

"A' well, thank God," replied Mrs. Peacock. "The gudeman's up at Turnlea the now, helping with the shearing."

"Well, we have great cause to be thankful for such fine harvest weather—no a drop o' rain for the last fortnight," said Jenny. "If the farmers get as gude a time for drying the grain and leading it in, we should have cheap meal this winter, which will be a blessing."

"'Deed, ay," said Mrs. Peacock; "even a penny down on the peck is a relief to a poor man that has many mouths to feed. And talking o' that, there was that misfortunate creature Maggie Simpson, Peter Pirret's wife, here the other day greeting and asking me to give her credit for another peck o' meal, because Peter's web isna done yet, and she's sprained her hand so ill that she canna get to the shearing, as she used to do. And she says there's no a penny in the house, and a' these hungry bairns to feed. Of course I had to give it to her; for,

though she mayna be much o' a manager, Maggie's a decent, hard-working creature, and aye pays, some time or other."

"Well," said Jenny, firing up at the mention of Peter Pirret, as was her wont, "I wouldna have refused the meal to Maggie, but no a grain o' it would I have allowed to make parritch for Peter Pirret's stamach. 'If any will not work, neither should he eat,' the Apostle Paul says; and he was a worker, if ever man was. You should have bound down Maggie to keep it for herself and the bairns, Mrs. Peacock."

"Would she have kept her promise, d'ye think?" said Mrs. Peacock, shaking her head. "No, no, lass; you ken as well as me that, bad as a man may be, his wife 'll no keep meat from him, if she has it."

"Well," exclaimed Jenny, "a' I'll say's this. If I had my will, I would gather a' the wives in the toun thegether, and we would carry canny Peter down to the pool in the glen, and dook him there till he roared for mercy, and promised to do a fair day's work at his loom ever after."

"Woman, you would kill the man with rheumatism," said Mrs. Peacock, laughing.

No fears o' him—lazy folk are ill to kill," said Jenny, also with a laugh. "They used to talk o' making scolding wives ride the stang when I was a bairn; it would be equal justice to dook lazy men that willna work for their families, I think. But now tell me, Mrs. Peacock, how do you get on with your bairns since the school was closed for the holidays? Mine gives me trouble enough; and you have five for my ane."

"Trouble!" exclaimed Mrs. Peacock, in a louder key than usual. "There's no end to my trouble, Mrs. Telfer. They're just out o' one mischief into another the whole o' the day, and I'm thankful when night comes and they're a' quiet in their beds. No that they're bad bairns; but lessons are grand for keeping down the spirits and hindering temptation. The whole o' them, except wee Dauny —and he would have been among them, doubtless, if he could walk instead o' toddle—were at the hunting of that poor silly thing Davie Warrander last week. I knew nothing about it at the time, and a bonnie flyting I gave them when I heard o't."

"My Tammie was in the thick o't too," said

Jenny, "but he got his licks as well as a flyting. I'm thinking he'll no try it again, if he has the opportunity. And 'deed he came back from the Sabbath-school last night almost greeting with what Elder Lowrie had said to them about their treatment o' the poor natural. He's a Christian man and a powerful speaker, Elder Lowrie—that is he."

"He's a' that, woman," acquiesced Mrs. Peacock. "I'm sure I'm heartily glad to have such a man to teach my bairns their duty to God and man. He would be a great loss to the place if he were removed. But after a', Mrs. Telfer, bairns will be bairns, let you bring them up as well as you can; and 'our Mr. Jeames,' as his wife calls him, should just take care that his son disna get out among them."

"He's doing that, from what I hear," said Jenny —"shutting the lad in like a hen in a cavy."

"So they tell me. Hech, sirs! we should be thankful that our bairns, troublesome though they are, are like the rest of the world," said the shop-mistress. "And speaking o' Davie," she continued, "Mrs. Warrander was here this morning for some-

thing; but you never can get any conversation out o' her. She just asks for what she wants, in her nervous, frightened kind o' way, and then runs away back to the house, as if she thought it would take fire when she was out o't. They're an unneeborly set o' folks these Warranders, as if nobody here was gude enough to speak to them —at least he is, for his wife's half silly, poor thing; and we ken what Davie is."

"He a dour, prideful man, James Warrander; and his pride will have a fall yet, if the Lord means to do his soul good," said Jenny Telfer, solemnly. "But I must be stepping away hame now, Mrs. Peacock. Put a peck o' peasemeal into this crock," pushing forward a black earthernware jar, that had been standing at her elbow during the talk. "You see the gudeman and Tammie like brose to their supper better than parritch And you'll give me twa pounds o' barley besides, in this napkin. There's your money."

"A' right, Mrs. Telfer; and many thanks to ye."

And the customer took her departure.

Jenny Telfer made an unusually large pot of broth the next day; and after their own dinner-

time was by, and Watty had started off, taking Tammie with him for company, to wait on a customer at some distance, she rapped at the door of her dinnerless neighbours. Poor Maggie opened it, looking white and starved, with her sprained left hand bound up, and evidently useless.

"Shut the door behind you, Maggie, and come into my house for a minute. I want to speak to you."

Maggie, in some wonder, obeyed.

"Sit down there," said Jenny, pushing her into a low chair by the fireside, "and sup these kail;" putting a bowl of thick steaming broth on the poor famished creature's lap, and laying a goodly piece of oatmeal cake on a stool beside it.

Maggie could not speak for astonishment; but she looked the thankfulness she felt, and began to eat the broth with the eagerness of great hunger; while Jenny bustled about the kitchen as if "redding-up," but watching her guest all the time out of the tail of her eye.

"Ay," said Jenny to herself, with an indignant sniff, "I see well enough how it's been. You've shared the parritch between Peter and the bairns,

and just left enough for yourself to keep the life in you, but no mair. And wouldna Peter take care to have a full dish, the lazy, good-for-nothing loon that he is! I would rather hew stanes in a quarry than be the wife of such a man."

When the bowl was about half emptied, she observed that Maggie began to ply her spoon more and more slowly, and at last ceased to do so altogether, while she looked wistfully round at her.

"I've had a gude dinner, and thank ye for't, Mrs. Telfer," she said. "Would you mind if I was to take in what's left in the bowl to wee Merran? She's but a weakly bairn, and needs better food than I have to give her the now. I'm quite satisfied with what I've had already: you're no objecting?"

"But I am though," said Jenny, sturdily. "There's no more there than you need for yoursell. Woman, you're as white as a clout! and no kail o' mine, except what ye've had, shall gang into Peter Pirret's house. Sup them up, and then you can send in a' the bairns as well as Merran; I have kail the day for them a'."

"The Lord reward ye!" said Maggie, with the tears running down her cheeks; and the way she supped up the rest of the broth showed clearly that she had been denying herself for the sake of the child.

"I'm sure I have reason to be thankful for kind neebors," she said, gratefully, as she rose to place the empty bowl on the table. "Here's you the day, and last night, when I had used up the last o' the meal I had—and I got it and another peck before from Mrs. Peacock on credit—and didna ken where to turn to, didna worthy Tummas Lowrie come in, bringing me a peck from himsell? There's no pride about Tummas, though he's laird both o' his own house and Widow Smith's besides. And as the bairns were out he spoke so seriously to Peter, who, no doubt, doesna do his best, poor man, for his family, that I canna but think he may be the better o't."

"Well," said Jenny to herself, as her visitor departed, "if Peter Pirret ever becomes a steady working man, the age o' miracles must have come back. For me, I'll believe 't when I see 't. 'What's bred in the bane isna easily taken out o' the flesh.'"

And it was not the only occasion that week that Jenny made a larger pot of broth than usual to feed lazy Peter's wife and children, though she said nothing about it to any one but Watty—according to our Lord's injunction, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth;" for with all Jenny's shortcomings, the Scriptures were her habitual rule of life. Peter, either impelled by Elder Lowrie's reproof, or by several dinnerless days, managed to finish his web by Thursday evening, and tramped off with it on his shoulder to the manufacturing town next morning, thus relieving his family from their pressing necessity. He, perhaps, might have laboured more energetically after this, but Miss Janet at the manse, having heard of Maggie's misfortune, came—good, kindly, but injudicious soul—to her relief; which Peter seeing, relaxed his endeavours, and began to take his ease again, as Jenny Telfer had anticipated.

Davie Warrander was never seen again on the village street. He was effectually imprisoned behind the paling and gate which his father had erected, for he never attempted to climb them,

which, indeed, would have been impossible for one of so feeble a frame. He now spent most of his time out of doors in peering between the upright spars of the gate, which afforded him a glimpse into the workyard. There was little space betwixt the spars, but the workmen, as occasionally their looks fell in that direction, would catch sight of the idiot's eye between two of them; and they would make jocular remarks to each other, if their master was out of hearing, about the precautions he had adopted.

The mother's mind was more at rest about Davie's movements; she did not need to watch him so closely as before, and she had greater leisure for her household work, which she was beginning to feel heavy and burdensome. Old age was creeping upon her before her time; she was getting bent, and feeble, and emaciated. Weak though she was in mind and body, she was wonderfully conscientious and persevering in everything she considered duty. I have alluded to the saying of her censorious neighbours, that "she could only do two things—keep a house clean, and read her Bible." The Bible had truly

been poor Jeanie's treasure from her early youth; and she had an understanding of its truths that her "wise," hard-headed husband had never acquired; for his knowledge of them was derived from man, while hers was from the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures were a "lamp to her feet, and a light to her paths;" and she did what she could in her simple, trusting, unwearying way to fix passages of them in Davie's memory by daily repeating them to him, always at the close making him kneel down at her side while she prayed fervently for a blessing. How much he understood she could scarcely tell; but she sowed the seed in humble faith, knowing that with God all things are possible.

The father, conscientious also according to his standard of duty, was profoundly ignorant that the weak-minded woman whom he had made the mistake of marrying more than twenty years before, and whom he had always regarded with patient contempt, was daily doing a work for God towards their unfortunate son with the one talent which He had committed to her charge, which he, with his five or ten, had never thought of attempt-

ing. The vow he had made at the child's baptism, to "train it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," he had not considered binding upon him as it grew in years, and its idiocy became apparent. He only felt himself called upon to provide for Davie's bodily wants, and to guard him as a creature incapable of protecting himself from what might injure or oppress him; but patiently to try to awaken the dormant intellect, to insinuate the simple gospel into such a hopelessly feeble understanding, James Warrander never regarded as his duty, and would probably have shrunk from it if he had, for, as I have said, he loathed the very sight of his son. But his poor despised wife—one of the Lord's "little ones" notwithstanding—she on whom no vow lay, went on day by day, and year by year, doing this work in faith, adding "Line upon line, and precept upon precept;" believing that the "Lord would not let His Word return unto Him void," even in such a case as Davie's.

"I will meet my poor Davie yet in heaven," she would sometimes whisper to herself. "I ken I will—I ken I will."

As time went on, she became conscious that her health was rapidly failing her, and that death might not be far off. The idea came upon her with a sudden shock, not as a startling and unwelcome summons to herself, but because of Davie. Davie! what changes might it not involve for him! Davie! who depended so upon her; who needed to be cared for now as much as in his childhood; whom no one but herself understood, or would be troubled with—not even his own father, who, she knew, shrank from the very sight of him! The thought of Davie neglected, perhaps harshly treated, when she was gone, bowed down the spirit of the poor woman, whose trust in God seemed to fail her in this matter; and that awful threat of her husband's, uttered a year ago, came vividly back to her recollection. It haunted her during the day, and troubled her dreams by night.

"If I could but take him wi' me—if I could but take him wi' me!" she would piteously murmur to herself; "for if Davie fashes or affronts our Mr. Jeames—and who will watch that he doesna when I am gone?—he'll lock him up—he'll lock him up in that awful place he spoke of."

Of course, seventy years ago, asylums for the insane were not conducted on the same enlightened principles as now; and there was some reason for the apprehensions with which she regarded them, and which were not peculiar to herself. There was an impression on the public mind that they were a convenient way for relatives' sometimes getting rid of weak-minded, troublesome individuals like Davie, who yet needed no such severe restraint.

"I might speak to auld Turnbull," she considered. "They say he's no a regular doctor, but very skilly about trouble; and he might give me something that might do me gude. But no, no," she continued; "I'm just going the way my Auntie Jeanie did, that I was named after. I mind her weel; she died about the same age as mine, and her trouble came upon her just as mine is doing on me. Every week she got weaker and weaker, like me, though she still kept moving about; and when she took to her bed, she was only four days in it when she died. I ken it will be the same with me; and oh that I was but like her in other respects, for she was a gude Christian woman, if

ever there was one, and ready for her change. The doctor said it was a wasting, and that nothing could be done for her; so what's the use of troubling folk about mysell? I'll just lippen" (trust) "mysell to the Lord; and oh that I could lippen Davie, too!"

Her husband did not observe the change in her, though Mrs. Peacock spoke of it to her customers when Jeanie had been to the shop. He was only in the house at meal-times during the day, when everything was as comfortable as usual; and he was not aware at what a cost of fatigue that comfort and cleanliness were now produced. His wife's appearance was the last thing to attract his attention, nor had he been accustomed to hear her complain of ailments like some; so that he was considerably surprised one day when, at length compelled by her increasing weakness to ask some help, she said to him, in her nervous, trembling way,—

"I'm no feeling very strong—would you have any objections that I should get Peter Pirret's wife in to wash? Mrs. Peacock at the shop says she's a decent, quiet woman, that would be glad

to get a day's work now and then. She needna be in your way at a', for she will wash in the shed; and," she added, hesitatingly, "I can keep Davie up the stair, out o' her sight."

"Do as you like," he answered, after a minute's silence. Her request had caused him to regard her with attention, and he now saw how feeble and attenuated she had become. He moved towards the door, but suddenly returned.

"Have the woman," he said, "as often as you need her; I dinna grudge the money. But you'll take care," he added, impressively, "that she sees nothing in this house for her to claver about when out o't."

And now he went, feeling satisfied that he had done his duty. He thought of her evident debility more than once during the day, and in the evening, when seated in his usual place by the fireside, he occasionally raised his eyes from his book and glanced across the hearth at her. She occupied the low chair which he had made for her better accommodation when nursing Davie. Davie was beside her on a stool, crouched in a heap in the corner of the chimney, and dozing with his mouth wide open in the genial warmth which he always

seemed to enjoy. She was trying to knit, but every few minutes her weary hands dropped upon her lap, and she had to rest them before she could resume her work. He knew that his wife had a habit of uttering her thoughts half aloud sometimes; and it had always annoyed him as a sign of mental weakness, though it is not necessarily so. He had never paid attention to her words, but ate his meals, and continued to read his book in the evenings, contemptuously ignoring the peculiarity. This night, however, on hearing the low but perfectly audible whisper, he looked up, and for the first time listened, and with some interest.

She was leaning back in her chair, with her eyes closed, and, evidently unconscious that her words were audible, she was praying. The words that reached his ear were these: "O Lord, if it be Thy blessed will, take Davie away before me—oh, take him away before me!" And after a pause of a few minutes, the same earnest petition, but in fuller words, was repeated: "O Lord, if it be gude in Thy sight, take poor Davie away before me—oh, take him away before me, for I'm fear'd—I'm fear'd to leave him ahint me!"

James Warrander was more struck and troubled than he liked to acknowledge to himself by that prayer. This feeble-minded but pious woman—for he had always believed in her piety, though he thought it of a weak, unreasoning sort, but well enough for one of her sex—was she judging him and arraigning him before the Almighty in her heart? In what respect had he failed in his duty either to her or to her son, that she should fear to leave the latter in his care after her death?—if she was dying, which he could not believe. And yet the repugnance that instinctively rose within him as he turned his eyes from his wife to Davie answered him now like a sudden revelation; and under its painful influence he started up and went out to the open air, to try to shake it off by motion and change of scene. For the first time, because under this strange light, a suspicion arose in his mind that the spirit in which he had performed these duties might not stand that Divine plummet which goes down into the lowest and most secret depths of a man's heart, and searches them out. And the thought was most grievous and unwelcome to one who had ever

valued himself for his scrupulous discharge of them.

It was the foolish, nervous apprehension of a weak woman, he at length concluded, arising from the depression and anxiety caused by bodily infirmity; and he determined that he would think no more of it. But he found that easier to resolve than to practise in the light of conviction which had been let in on himself, but of which he understood nothing.

The following morning he himself went to Pirret's house, and engaged Maggie to come for a certain time every day till his wife was better. But though thus relieved, she did not seem to rally; and never complaining, grew weaker and weaker as the days went on. And more than once did James Warrander overhear the same petition as before.

At length a day came on which she could not rise from her bed, and her husband went in search of old Turnbull, and brought him to see her. The old man felt her pulse, and examined her symptoms with as much gravity and dignity as a licensed practitioner, and then led the way downstairs.

"What's the matter with my wife, think ye, Mr. Turnbull?" said James Warrander, when they were below, and out of her hearing.

"It's a wasting—what we call a galloping consumption, sir," said Turnbull, without hesitation. "I have seen many a case in my time, and I'm no easily mistaken in the appearances—no, sir. Medicine's o' no use for her. Give her something now and then to keep up her strength; it's a' that can be done. Thank ye, Mr. Warrander, sir; I'm sorry to tell you such ill news. Gude morning."

James Warrander that afternoon sent off a note by one of his workmen to his widowed sister, who resided in Chapelton, telling her the state of his wife's health, and asking her to come and attend upon her.

"I will come in the carrier's cart the day after the morn," was the verbal answer sent back.

Jeanie Warrander lay in her bed, quietly sinking, as she had anticipated. Davie was always beside her; and when her eyes were not shut they were generally turned upon him, watchful even unto death. She had never spoken of being ill to him, and he could not understand why she did

not get up and come downstairs to protect him from the woman there. Maggie did what was necessary for the sick woman in the meantime, and prepared the food.

On the morning on which he expected his sister, James Warrander sat by his wife's bedside. She was evidently changed, and he could not leave her. He took up her Bible, which lay where Mr. Geddes had left it on the previous day, and read some passages aloud, such as, "In My Father's house are many mansions." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." She opened her eyes, which had been closed for some time, and looked at him earnestly.

"Jeanie," he said, speaking clearly and slowly, that she might understand him, "I have something to say to you that may ease your mind. I can never be to our poor afflicted son" (*our* son!) "what you have been; but I promise you that I'll try to learn to bear with his ways, and that I'll watch over him during my life, and will provide that he'll be weel cared for after my death."

She heard and understood him. A bright gleam of satisfaction for a moment illumined her pallid countenance, and she feebly tried to extend her hand to her husband. But even as she attempted it, the solemn shadow passed over the face, and Jeanie Warrander departed to the Saviour whom she had loved, and who would surely say of this feeble but true disciple, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

CHAPTER IV.

JAMES WARRANDER'S BLESSING.

"ISABEL," said James Warrander to his sister, a healthy, robust woman, some years older than himself, the day after his wife's funeral, "I'll be glad if you can make up your mind to give up your house in Chapelton and live here, as I would rather have a relation than a stranger in the house, as things are."

"You're just the same man as ever, I see, Jamie," replied his sister. "You never liked strange folk a' your days, and your own company aye pleased you best of a'. But as to giving up my house, I dinna ken about that."

"You'll have all freedom in the house here. You'll be mistress of it, and I'll no meddle with you in anything. That poor lad may be troublesome for a while, till he forgets about his mother," he added, hastily, and as if the subject pained

him; "but I'll keep him away from you as much as possible. There's no one at hame to suffer by your leaving; and you've been accustomed to do all the work o' your own house, both in your husband's lifetime and now."

"It's no the work I'm thinking o'," said his sister; "and I'm willing enough to stay for a time and look after Davie. Poor thing! he's missing his mother terribly."

And so it was arranged; only Mrs. Buchan still retained her house and furniture—"in case of accidents," she said.

Poor Davie! As his aunt had remarked, his distress at his mother's prolonged absence—for they, in their ignorance how to deal with him, had not let him see her after her corpse was laid out, and had kept him shut up during the time of the funeral—was pitiful to witness. He saw her a few minutes after her death; but as for two days previous she had lain so still as to seem asleep, he saw no difference, and was with difficulty induced to leave the room. When he returned, he found the door locked and the key absent, for they could not tell what effect the sight of the

straightened corpse might produce on him, or what liberties he might take with it; for the father was as ignorant of Davie's ways as the aunt, and they both shrank with a kind of horror from the experiment. He went upstairs immediately when his father had unfastened the door which gave admittance to the back-yard where they had confined him.

"Mither, are you no waken yet?" he asked in tones which could be heard distinctly over the still house, addressing the unconscious tenant of the chamber through the closed door.

"Mither, mither, will you no get up and come down?" he continued, after listening vainly for an answer, and beginning to whimper at this unusual inattention to his wishes. "Mither, I wush you would get up and come down. You havena heard me my verses about God, and we havena prayed to Him either this day or yesterday, mither. You have forgotten, and He'll no be pleased, mither."

The father and aunt heard every word that he uttered as they sat together in the kitchen below. It was the first intimation James Warrander had had that his wife had attempted to instruct their

son in religion, and had daily prayed with him. It touched him painfully; but things were constantly paining and disturbing him now.

"I'll gang up and try to coax him away," said Mrs. Buchan.

"Is she sleeping?" Davie asked her, anxiously. And she answered hesitatingly.

It was indeed a sleep into which Jeanie had fallen; but she could not tell him it was the sleep of death. She left that for his father to explain.

"But she'll waken some time?" said Davie.

"Ay, ay, she will waken some time," said his aunt, in low, solemn tones; "and when she wakens she'll be a' weel and bonnie, Davie. Come awa' down the stair wi' me, my man."

"Will she—will she be bonnie?" said the poor natural, brightening up at the thought. "That's fine!—oh, that's fine! But I'll no come down the stair; I'll wait here till she wakens."

And he seated himself on the floor, close to his mother's door; and his aunt was obliged to leave him there, for she could not force him away. They heard him every now and then speak to his dead mother through it, asking if "she was not

waken yet, and would she no come and gie him his dinner."

His aunt at length succeeded in getting him away, by the offer of food in the kitchen. As I have already mentioned, his father was not accustomed to see him eat; and again he was strangely surprised when his idiot son, before partaking of what was placed before him, closed his eyes reverently, and repeated, child-like, the grace his mother had taught him: "O Lord, bless my meat, and make poor Davie good, for Jesus Christ's sake."

"That's Jeanie's doing, poor thing!" said Mrs. Buchan to herself, while tears filled her eyes.

As soon as Davie had finished his meal—and it was not pleasant to look at and listen to him during it—he returned to his station at the death-chamber door, and did not quit it till evening, when he seemed to lose hope of his mother getting up that night, while the gleam of firelight from the open kitchen door upon the wall at the foot of the stairs attracted him to his usual place in the warm corner of the chimney, where he sat muttering that "his mither was sure to waken the morn," till he dropped asleep.

It was the same each day till the funeral was over—Davie, except when he wanted his meals, remaining outside his mother's room, and asking often through the door if "she was not waken yet" —and owing to this it was found necessary to coffin the dead woman late at night, when Davie was sound asleep in bed. His aunt kept him in the back-yard during the hour appointed for the funeral; but when his father had returned from the grave, the restraint was taken off him—it could not be longer continued. He went upstairs immediately, and, finding the lately closed door unlocked, he entered the room pleased and chuckling, exclaiming, "Mither, mither, you maun be waken now!"

Poor bewildered Davie! The room and bed were tenantless, and they heard him whimpering and muttering from the disappointment. Presently he left the room, calling out, as he went into his own garret, "Mither, mither, where are ye?" Then descending the stairs, he searched the parlour and every corner below with the same anxious, whimpering cry.

"What's to be done with him, Jamie?" asked Mrs. Buchan, much troubled.

"I canna tell, Isabel," said James Warrander, humbly, after a long pause, during which various feelings contended with him. "I have maybe taken ower little thought of him in past days, and I dinna ken how his mother managed him."

He had not forgot his voluntary promise to his dead wife; but during this unhappy week, brought so much more into personal contact with Davie and his uncouth habits than he had ever been before, owing to the anxious care of the mother, and perplexed how to gain influence over him, it had been a hard struggle with him to keep it, and to restrain the disgust and antipathy which the presence of his idiot son continually awakened within him. His strong, resolute will had so kept down the expression of them, however, that his sister had no suspicion of their intensity. To hate the poor idiot would have been most reprehensible in her eyes; to view his existence as a misfortune of no ordinary magnitude, her brother, she thought, was justly entitled to feel; and this, she believed, was all he felt.

I have previously stated that Davie had always stood in awe of his father; and though brought

more into contact with him since his mother's death, he had not grown more familiar with him. But now that his search for his absent mother had failed, he returned to the kitchen and went up to where his father was moodily sitting.

"Man," he said, to the former's surprise, "where's my mither?"

"Do you ken where heaven is, Davie?" said James Warrander, looking shrinkingly into the vacant and unhappy face of his son.

"Up above the stars—where God is," replied the idiot, immediately, with a solemn upward glance at the ceiling.

"She's there; God has taken her there," said his father, feeling a difficulty unexpectedly removed by this knowledge of Davie's.

"What for has God taken her there? I want her to come back."

"She canna come back; but you'll maybe gang to her some day," said his father.

"Will I? Man, are you sure I'll gang?" said Davie, eagerly.

"You'll gang if God pleases," said James Warrander.

"But He's no pleased wi' me; He canna be pleased wi' me," whimpered poor Davie, "for I havena said my prayers to Him since my mither took that lang sleep. I aye said them wi' her, and she's gane awa; and He'll no let me gang to heaven to her if I dinna say my prayers. But she's maybe come back up the stair now."

And away he shambled, in his uncouth fashion, out of the kitchen. His aunt was upstairs, putting the room in order; but no mother. He went through every room and outhouse, as before, and then returned, restless and disappointed, to his suffering father, who had been murmuring to himself in his absence, "I said to her I would try to like him, and that I never would say a hard word to him. Lord, help me to keep my promise! it's no easy."

"She's no there," said Davie, coming up again to his father's chair. "Man, are you sure she's gane to heaven, where God is?"

"I am sure, Davie; but you must not call me 'man'—call me 'father.'"

"Na, na," said Davie, in a low tone, with the same serious glance upward as before, "I canna do that; 'Faither which art in heaven,' you ken."

Poor Davie had never realized an earthly father; he had been taught that his Father was God. His mother was afraid that h husband would not like to hear the name from their son's lips, and had never spoken of him by it.

"Will you call me James, then?" said his father, after a pause.

"Ay, ay; I'll call you Jeames—Jeames, Jeames," he repeated, chuckling over the name, which seemed to take his fancy. "Jeames," he suddenly said, "will you let me say my prayers to you, as I did to mither? I canna gang to my bed again without saying my prayers. Oh! will you let me say my prayers to you?"

"Very weel," said James Warrander, uncomfortable and reluctant, but unable to refuse his idiot son's urgency. And they were alone.

Poor Davie, with a look of relief, instantly knelt down—though a grown man—as a child might have done at his father's knee, and repeated the evening prayer he had learnt from his mother: "O Lord, pardon all that I have done wrong this day. Take care of me through the night; make me good, and take me to heaven at last, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

And then he rose from his knees, sat down quietly on his stool in the corner, and was soon asleep, as usual.

After this he always knelt down by his father's knee, morning and evening, when they were alone—he never did it in his aunt's presence—and uttered, with childish reverence, the appropriate prayer on each occasion, and as if he really understood somewhat of the meaning of what he asked. His mother, by patient repetition, had got fixed in his memory some verses of the Bible, such as "God is love;" "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," etc.; and before he rose from his knees Davie would repeat them—always in the same order; then the poor fellow went away satisfied.

It was soon evident that he was transferring the affection he had borne for his mother to the father he had formerly instinctively stood in awe of. It was embarrassing and unwelcome to James Warrander, who had never anticipated this consequence, when giving that deathbed promise to his wife; but he could not harshly repulse the gibbering, troublesome attachment of the idiot.

When his father was in the workshop, he would watch from one of the front windows for his appearance in the yard, and the slightest glimpse of him would produce a series of irrepressible chuckles which spoke his delight. In the house he followed him up and down like a dog, and in the evening transferred his stool from its old corner beside his mother's chair, to the opposite one close to his father's, whose clothes he would occasionally stroke down with his long thin fingers while he kept murmuring his name, "Jeames, Jeames." James Warrander could not beat him off, like an intrusive dog, though to the undemonstrative and reserved man such tokens of affection were revolting and irritating.

"I never prayed till this time," James Warrander acknowledged long afterwards. And yet from childhood till now he had never failed to pray in secret, morning and evening, besides praying at family worship.

Had all these prayers, then, been formal and without the Spirit? They had, according to his after-conviction. Till now he had never felt constrained to pray—had never been driven to cry to

God under the strong pressure of need. A light had broke in upon him through the feeble instrumentality of his dying wife, and it showed him spiritually to himself as "hateful and hating:" and the once self-righteous Pharisee, in his sense of duties unlovingly discharged, and evil feelings indulged in and justified before God, was now secretly in the dust calling out in the anguish of his spirit, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

"It's an awful sight, the sight of one's own sinful soul, Mr. Lowrie," said James Warrander in after-days, when the good elder and he were often together. "I just got glimpses o't at first, like the gleam a dying candle sends through a dark room for a minute—a flash and then out, and the darkness again. Maybe the Lord kent that I couldna bear mair then; but I saw enough o' it before a' was done to cry, with David, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.' 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.'

"To bear wi' Davie was the greatest struggle I had, for my heart was hardened to him through the habit of years.

"Again and again, in the course of a single day, Mr. Lowrie, I have been obliged to shut myself into my ain room, and on my knees to cry to the Lord to take the hate and loathing out o' my heart."

"And He took them, Mr. Warrander," said Thomas, who had been listening with great interest.

"He took them," said James Warrander, slowly and thoughtfully, his eyes wistfully fixed upon the fire, as if he was mentally reviewing the experiences he was narrating to his friend; "aye, Mr. Lowrie He took them; but no at once, as I had hoped He would do. No; it wasna till Davie fell into the same dwining as his mother, which, you'll mind, was about eighteen months after her death—maybe the poor thing wasna seen to so carefully as he was by her—that the Lord took it a' away; and then it was a pleasure to me—yes, a pleasure, Mr Lowrie, to spend a' my spare time by his bedside, and listen to his bairnlike thoughts about Divine things. I have heard many gospel sermons in my time, but while watching Davie during that six weeks before his death, I learnt more of

the wonderful grace of God, as seen in such a weak, silly thing as him, than I have ever done from them a'. I used often to think of that passage then, 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence.'"

"Surely Thou art a God that doest wonders," thought good old Thomas Lowrie to himself that night as he traversed the short distance which lay between his house and the carpenter's.

If James Warrander, when a mere formal professor of religion, was respected for his probity and trustworthiness, how much more was it the case afterwards, when he had become a Christian indeed! He ere long became his minister's right hand. His leisure time was consecrated to the duties of the eldership; and when Thomas Lowrie succumbed to age and infirmity, his mantle fell upon him, and the Sabbath-school suffered no

loss. Not that James Warrander, in becoming a Christian, had changed his temperament; that was not to be expected; he was still a reserved and silent man. To Thomas Lowrie alone was his heart fully laid bare; but all who had known him before felt that he was an altered man. No one spoke of him as "dour and proud" now; and ere long it became a saying among the villagers, who remembered the date at which they had begun to remark the change in him, that "the charge of Daft Davie, after his wife's death, had brought a blessing to James Warrander."

LANG TAM TAMSON.

CHAPTER I.

THE HERD LAD.

LANG TAM TAMSON'S birth gave occasion to much gossip and many ill-natured surmises in the quiet country parish in which it took place. His mother had always been a peculiar woman, and her reserved though passionate temper was principally to blame for the people's talk.

"What has become of Tibby Taylor? I haven't seen her in the kirk since her return to the parish,' said my mother's predecessor in the manse to a decent old pauper woman whom she met on the road.

"'Deed, mem, I thought you would have heard; she's come home a widow, she says, and noo' she's gotten a lad bairn," said the old woman, composedly.

"Indeed," said the minister's wife, looking sur-

prised. "I have heard nothing of it, I suppose on account of Dr. Bertie's late illness, which has confined me to the house. She has married somewhat late in life, I think."

"That has she, mem," said old Ailie, emphatically; "she's five-and-thretty if she's a day. But the queer thing is, mem, though she wears a marriage-ring on her finger, she canna be got to tell ony particulars aboot the bairn's father except that his name was Tamson; the neebors think it looks very ill."

"She was always a close woman about her own affairs, and that may be the reason," said her questioner, treasuring up the news for the minister, who was an invalid at this time.

Tibby had been a "bondager" on one of the Hirsel farms before she left the parish for a manufacturing town at some distance, tempted by the high wages to be obtained there. A hind, to procure a situation, was often obliged to bind himself to feed and lodge a female labourer for his master's field work, who was thus designated. There was no notion of slavery connected with the name. It was an ordinary engagement between the parties,

lasting from term to term, and the hind received higher wages as compensation; though, when he had to lodge a stranger in a cottage whose accommodations scarcely sufficed for his own family, it was justly considered a hardship; and that hind was thought to be fortunate who had a daughter of a fitting age to be his bondager. On Tibby's return, after an absence of eighteen months, she offered herself as a lodger in the hind's house, intending, as soon as she was able, to resume her former work. But Sandy Jardine's wife refused to receive her. She had never liked the bondager and would not undertake to take charge of her child when she was out at work for any compensation she could offer. And the words in which she expressed her resolution were so strong and uncomplimentary that Tibby never forgave them.

Tibby went to live with old Ailie. Ailie had been a hard-working woman in her time. She had for many years been a childless widow, and now that her strength was spent and she had neither son nor daughter to help her, nobody thought the worse of her that she depended on parish aid. "She worked weel for her bread as

long as she could," all agreed, "and what could the puir body do now but come on the puir's box?"

Ailie nursed Tibby through her illness, and when the latter was able to resume her work, took charge of the infant during the day for a certain weekly consideration. She did her duty by it conscientiously. Not that the child was very cleanly kept and fed, or tenderly cared for—such things are not to be looked for in nurses of Ailie's age and class—but it was neither starved nor ill-used, and it throve in spite of the dirt and ill-prepared food. There was fine pure air outside of Ailie's cottage, though the inside was smoky and somewhat uncleanly; and Tam, who, from his earliest infancy, seemed bent on giving as little trouble to every one as he possibly could, was quite content to sleep or sprawl on the old tattered plaid that Ailie spread on the grass for him, while she sat smoking her cutty pipe and basking in the warm sunshine at the door—for it was towards the end of spring that Tam was born into the world. The "caller air," no doubt, did Tam much good, and helped him over the less favourable ci-

cumstances of his lot. Ailie was pleased with his unusual contentment. "He was a gude bairn," she said, "and never grat, to her recollection, except twice, when a prin had somehow ran into him."

In truth, the old woman had more affection for him than his mother. The latter went out early and returned late, weary and "taiglet," as she called it, and not liking to be "fashed" about anything. If the child had received its nourishment from her, perhaps the baby lips might have drawn her heart towards it; but from the beginning she had decided that she could not nurse him in addition to her work.

She kept him only barely decent in his garments during his infancy and childhood, but she never asked for assistance. Reserved though she was, she was yet an habitual grumbler, and she grumbled incessantly at the trouble Tam gave her. She thought it a hard thing after the day's fatigue to be awakened in the night to feed him, though Ailie, provoked with her unmotherliness, told her roundly that she ought to "think shame o' hersell to find faut with a wean that took his

drop milk as fast as he could swallow it, and then gae'd to sleep again without a greet in his head. She had had twa in her time, and she kent the difference." But Tibby was not a pleasant woman, and considered all bairns a "fash," whether contented or not.

As years passed on, the "sharp tongue" with which Sandy Jardine's wife had upbraided her had become still more sharp and viperish. Tibby's fellow-labourers dreaded a contention with her. The jibes and jeers which she knew had been freely uttered by all of them at her expense at the time of her return to the parish, were now returned with interest, and with a bitterness and power of sarcasm that made every one stand in awe of her. Her scolding tongue would reduce some women to silence and tears; others it would excite into hysteric rage; while some men that came under its lash would forget for a time the Scripture injunction, "Swear not at all." There was no use complaining to their employer; Tibby was too good a field hand—and she knew it—to be lightly dismissed.

If Tibby spared any one, it was old Ailie. She

was well aware that if she provoked the old woman to refuse to lodge her, no one else in the parish was likely to take her in; and it would be a serious thing to be cast out with that "fashious wean" without a roof to cover them. And yet she could not always command her temper even towards her. Fortunately, Ailie was growing deaf as she got older; but there was no escape for Tam, whose organs of hearing were remarkably acute. No wonder that Tibby at last acquired through the parish the unenviable nomenclature of "flyting Tibby Taylor"—the people (as is not unusual in Scotland) continuing to call her by her maiden name.

The time came when Tam's schooling had to be thought of; but Tibby maintained her inability to pay for it. As there was no law compelling parents to educate their children, Tam might have gone ignorant to his grave, though the parish school was but a short half-mile from his home, if the minister and elders, for the sake of the boy, had not decided that he must be sent there *in formâ pauperis;* and Tam, accordingly, was added to the short list of pauper children

whom Mr. Bairnsfather was bound to teach without fee.

Tam might now he said to live in a perpetual atmosphere of "flyting." He was scolded by his mother at home, and he was lectured almost all school-time by Mr. Bairnsfather, who occasionally diversified reproof with "palmies." Not a day passed in which Tam did not receive his palmies, till the wonder was that his hands did not become completely indurated under the application. Mr. Bairnsfather had a natural repulsion to pauper scholars, and to Tam in particular among them. Tam was palmied for being too late for school, though others were sometimes later than he, and would slink into their places without attracting any unpleasant notice from the dominie; but then these were the sons of substantial farmers or artisans, whose fees were regularly paid, and of whose hospitality Mr. Bairnsfather occasionally partook. On one occasion, and one only, Tam was palmied for arriving too early, and presumptuously resting himself on the doorstep of the schoolhouse till it was opened. He was palmied for slowness; and this he certainly was

guilty of, though the palmies did not seem to improve it. In winter he was palmied for a chronic cold he had in his head, which made him snivel when reading his lesson—Ailie's cot was woefully damp in winter, and his straw bed was in the dampest corner of it. And he was palmied also for not contributing a peat to the stove, which peat his mother refused to give him, and which, having a tender conscience, he dared not steal. He had to bear the additional punishment of being never permitted to approach the stove, though his poor naked feet, blue with cold, might have moved even Mr. Bairnsfather to compassion In short, any excuse served for punishing Tam.

Tam's only quiet bit of the day, indeed, was between his return from school and his mother's return from her work. In summer he had generally two hours of peace, during which the much-enduring boy manifested a willingness to help old Ailie, and an ability to "crack" with her that the old woman fully appreciated, and which she rewarded by protecting him from his mother's viperous tongue and ruthless fists as much as, in her feebleness, she possibly could.

"There's no a better callant, mem, to be found in the parish," she said to the minister's wife; "he'll rin ony errand for me. I've seen him gang out wi' his bare feet in the snaw, puir fellow, just to fill my water stoups because I was stiff and sair wi' the rheumatiz; and he'll rise in the morning, that will he, and do ony turn to spare me, before he gangs to the schule. They say the puir laddie is unco' put upon there; but he says little aboot it, for oh! he's a patient crature, as truly he needs to be, baith at hame and elsewhere."

Mrs. Bertie, who was a kind-hearted though formal woman, was moved by Ailie's commendations to take more notice of Tam than formerly. Now when she met him on the road she would stop and have a friendly talk with him. Once or twice she gave him a sixpence to help to buy him a pair of shoes; but the sixpences were appropriated by Tibby, and no shoes were forthcoming. Tam was so little accustomed to kindness that Mrs. Bertie's was evidently a pleasant but perplexing problem to him, and he pondered over it in his slow way; for Tam was undoubtedly

slow, though he had a powerful memory to retain all that the scolding and palmying allowed to enter his mind. He was not deficient in intellect, but there was a certain simplicity about his character which superficial observers mistook for weakness. Ailie's opinion was "that the puir laddie was just dung stupid wi' his mither's and the dominie's flyting and banging."

Wonderfully patient and contented the boy was under treatment that would have soured and morally ruined three-fourths of his school companions. These schoolfellows, though they saw and probably condemned the brutal treatment he experienced from the "maister," could not always resist flinging a stone after the poor boy themselves. While he was proceeding on his solitary walk home, many a time was the cry raised after him, "Faitherless Tam! faitherless Tam!"—which mysterious reproach, scarcely understood by the boys themselves, and suggested by remarks of their elders, began in course of time to work slowly and persistently in his mind.

"Where was his faither? and what for had everybody a faither but him? and why did the

laddies cry that after him? Wee Jean Tasker's faither was dead, he knew, for he had seen the burial; but they never cried after her for it. Maybe his faither was dead, and buried too." And acting upon this new idea, Tam might have been seen for some days thereafter, during the school play-hour, examining every headstone in the churchyard; but without avail, for the name of Tamson or Thomson, common as it is was not to be deciphered on any of them. But another idea now occurred to Tam, suggested by his observing how many graves wanting headstones were to be found in the burial-ground. No memorial had been erected to his father's memory—he had never heard of his mother's absence from the parish—and Tam felt certain this must be the disgrace; no "Sacred to the memory of," etc., to show that his father had once existed.

"Mither," he was forced under the bewilderment and pressure of these unusual conjectures to say to her one evening, as he was sitting in the comfortless corner to which he was always condemned, that he might be "out o' folks' way";

"mither, what for is there no a headstane in the kirkyard to my faither's memory?"

The question was so unexpected and extraordinary that Tibby for some moments could only gasp and stare at him; Ailie herself, to whom Tibby had not been more communicative about her private affairs than to others, was dumbfounded by it, and thought the boy was *fey*.

"Because, ye see," continued Tam, gravely, and as if arguing the point with himself, "Jean Tasker's faither's dead and buried, but he has a headstane; and it maun be because mine has nane that the laddies are aye cryin' 'Faitherless Tam! faitherless Tam!' after me: I dinna like it, mither, and I wish ye would put up a headstane."

"I'll faither ye and headstane ye baith, ye langleggit, senseless gomeril that ye are," shrieked Tibby, making a furious dart at the boy. "Tak ye that, and that, and that, to learn ye to haud your illscrapit tongue after this," raining down a shower of blows upon him as she spoke.

And this was the only result of Tam's investigations, while old Ailie warned him privately never to speak again to his mother on that subject.

The portion of the Bible read the following day at school was in the book of Esther, and contained the description of the hanging of Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai; which made a considerable impression upon Tam's imagination. He learnt at the same time that to be hanged on a gallows was a great disgrace to the culprit's family. Another and a striking idea in consequence occurred to him.

"Was my faither ever hangit, Ailie?" he took the first opportunity after his return home of asking of the old woman in a frightened whisper, though his mother at that time was at least half a mile off.

"Eh, sirs! haud your tongue, bairn, or ye'll bring yoursell in for another licking, and ye get enough o' that at ony time!" exclaimed the old woman. "Hangit! na, na, naething o' that kind. Though mony as honest a man has been, I wouldna wonder, and he may hae been hanged for aught I can tell," murmured Ailie to herself in conclusion.

"I dinna ken what to make o' that bairn," said Ailie, when relating the boy's remarks to a neigh-

bour; "he'll sometimes say the wisest auld-farrant things that ye ever heard, and at another time he'll be as simple as a babby."

If Tam's wit did not grow rapidly, as was generally thought, his legs did, and he had acquired his life-long designation of "Lang Tam Tamson" while yet at school. This exuberant growth of his was one of Tibby's great grievances, for though the village tailor was strictly charged to make his corduroys of unusual longitude in the legs and arms, and to tuck them up so that they could be let down when necessity called for it, Tam was constantly outgrowing these precautions; and bitterly did his mother complain when forced to patch and eke. He was a healthy boy, however, but very spare and thin, for he never had much to nourish him. Porridge and "kirned" milk morning and night, and a piece of oatmeal cake for his dinner at the school playhour, were Tam's unvarying diet. He could have eaten more, doubtless, but no more being ever forthcoming, Tam's stomach contentedly adapted itself to its allotted quantity.

When Tam's schooling came to an end, his

acquirements were about the average of village boys. He was a good reader, but an indifferent writer and counter. And considering the disadvantages to which he had been subjected, it said much for the boy's perseverance that he had attained so much.

Happy as a king was Tam when, escaped from the brutal rule of the "maister," he reigned as herd over Farmer Telfer's cattle for the (to him) munificent reward of sixpence a week and his victuals. Even the big "Bill" ceased to be an object of dread to him after the first few days. The bull acknowledged lawful authority in the person of Tam, and gave him as little trouble as he had ever himself given to those who bore rule over him. Tam had now abundance of leisure, and that part of it which was not spent in plaiting grenadiers' caps and children's rattles with the rushes which grew profusely in the neighbourhood, was occupied by him in reading the pocket Bible which his kind friend, the minister's wife, had presented to him, accompanied with much good advice, on his leaving school. No wonder that Tam, in after life, though often laughed at by his undiscerning

neighbours for his simplicity, acquired among them the reputation of being, like Apollos, "mighty in the Scriptures."

Tam visited his mother on Saturday nights. He got a clean "sark" from her then, and she took possession of his sixpence. She never struck him now, but her tongue was as venomous and sharp as ever; and the boy's affections were given to old Ailie instead of to her. He was become a favourite, not merely with the farmer's children, for whom his adroit fingers were always fashioning something curious, but with his master and mistress. His trustworthiness had soon become apparent; and as the farmer had been previously worried by a succession of bird-nesting and trap-setting herds, Tam's merit stood out in comparison. Treated with kindness by his employers, Tam would occasionally have the courage to beg a new-laid egg from his mistress for his old nurse, which he conveyed to her without his mother's knowledge.

Tam had a more comfortable bed now than ever he had had before, though it was only a rug in the straw loft over the byre, to which access was ob-

tained by a ladder; but the straw in which he nestled was clean and dry, and Tam ceased to snivel after his change of residence. They fed him coarsely—Tam did not know experimentally the meaning of coarse and fine—but plentifully at the farmhouse; and Tam's appetite developed with his opportunities. And thereupon he took to growing with such perseverance and determination as showed how grateful a soil was being at last properly cultivated.

When my father and mother took the place of Dr. and Mrs. Bertie in the manse and parish, Tam was no longer a herd plaiting rushes, with one eye on his performance and another on his cattle, but a tall, strong young shepherd, on a sheep farm two miles from the manse, with hundreds of sheep to shear, mark, and watch over during the year. He had earned such a character for intelligence and fidelity in his vocation, that Tam would have been offered similar situations in plenty, if his master could have been so blind to his own interests as to have parted with him. Though Tam in some respects was considered simple by others—simple in regard to

evil he certainly was—all agreed that he was both shrewd and thoughtful in character. They thought this inconsistent with his simplicity—the few who saw deeper and understood Tam best, could easily reconcile the two.

Tam was a householder now. A cottage of one apartment on the bank of the Tivie burn, some short distance from the more elevated farm-house, was his home. He had dutifully taken his mother there to keep house for him after old Ailie's death, who bequeathed to him instead of to Tibby her old sticks of furniture. Among these was the three-legged stool which had been Tam's invariable seat in his sorely-tried child-hood, and which must have been associated in his mind with many a harsh word and blow, as Ailie's statement was that Tibby's custom was to "knock the bairn off the bit creepie wi' a cuff on ae side o' the head, and to knock him on again wi' a cuff on the tither."

Tibby at fifty-seven could no more work as she had done. Like Ailie, she suffered much from rheumatism; but she could spin in the chimney corner and do the work of the house. Some

people alleged that she had made a "stocking" for herself, having been thrifty and hard-living all her days; but if so, she kept it carefully concealed—none of it was ever forthcoming to help the humble housekeeping. Her temper did not improve with rest and age, and as she had fewer persons than formerly to discharge it on, it may reasonably be supposed that all Tam's natural and acquired patience was kept in full exercise. Few people cared to visit the cottage, which was remote from the public road; and probably the consciousness that she was disliked made the soured, discontented woman more ungracious to those who, from charitable motives, did inquire for her at times.

Among these was my mother. Her first sight of Tibby was in the kirk; for Tibby, notwithstanding her universal hatred to mankind, had been a constant kirk-goer all her days; and her thin, sharp, brown face, now "wrinkled with eld" and vindictive tempers, attracted my mother's notice, as it peered inquisitively at her from one of the pews under the front gallery. My mother had only to inquire who the singular-looking little

old woman who sat beside the remarkably tall young man was, to hear such stories of "flyting Tibby," including the surmises about Tam's parentage, as might have frightened the boldest from seeking her acquaintance. But she heard much also of Tam's dutifulness and patience, and she determined to venture.

Tam's cottage lay at the foot of the hills on the slopes of which he fed his flocks. It was low, strongly built, principally of unhewn stones without mortar, and thatched thickly with heather. The Tivie ran in front, and behind was a small rude garden, redeemed from the hillside, surrounded by a rough stone fence, in which Tibby cultivated potatoes and lang kail. Two "skeps" of bees, placed close to the house wall, gathered their fine-flavoured honey from the heather blooms of the adjacent hills, and were a source of considerable profit to her.

Tibby was not savagely uncivil to my mother when she paid her visit; her ungraciousness was more passive than active. She invited her, though with some reluctance in her manner, to come in and sit down, and leading the way through a

narrow entrance passage into the house, pointed to a chair, and then seating herself in silence opposite to her visitor, grimly waited, it seemed to the latter, to be interrogated; and when my mother, somewhat embarrassed by so chilling a reception, had recourse to that never-failing subject, the weather, she only drily responded, "Ay, ay, the day's weel enough," as if determined to give no assistance to her in carrying on a conversation.

"You have a quiet dwelling here," said my mother, struggling against the discouragement; "but you must sometimes feel the want of neighbours, I should think."

"Neebors!" answered Tibby, with a sneer. "If ye had said I was lucky in the want o' them, ye would hae spoken something like sense."

My mother was silenced. She was but newly come to the parish, and was not familiar with country people; besides, she was more than half afraid of Tibby.

"Ye're the minister's wife—arena ye?" she asked, after a short pause, during which her sharp black eyes had freely scrutinised her visitor's dress and face.

My mother answered in the affirmative.

"Weel, ye're pleasanter looking than the ane that was before ye," said Tibby, bluntly; "*she* likit to hae her spune in a folks' brose, that did she. But will ye tell me what's brought ye here the day?"

"I want to get acquainted with my husband's people, Tibby," said my mother, smiling. "I hear you have got a very good son," she continued, giving a new, and she hoped more fortunate, direction to the conversation, which as yet had been carried on through difficulties.

"He micht be better and he micht be waur," was all that cantankerous Tibby would admit.

"I want to get acquainted with him too," said my mother.

"That's easy done," said Tibby, coolly. "Ye need only speel the hill at the back o' the house—there, ye can see it through the window before ye; and by the time ye get to the tap o't ye'll be sure to get a sight o' him—he's easily seen, there's sae muckle o' him—lying or sitting on the grass wi' his dowgs beside him, and mair likely than no

reading his Bible, for if he's no gude it's no frae ignorance o' the Scriptures. Ye had better be ganging, I think, for the day's wearing on, and I'm busy wi' my housewifeship, and canna waste time in clavering."

My mother, of course, took her dismissal, rather relieved to get out of the grim old woman's company. She was curious to see the son of so strange a person, and having the whole afternoon before her, for my father was attending a meeting of Presbytery, she did climb the hill, and soon descried Tam on its other side, with his sheep feeding all around and his dogs stretched beside him, which soon warned him of his approaching visitor. Tam was seated on a little turfy hillock. He received my mother's visit shyly, but with evident pleasure; for the parish had already sat in judgment on the minister's wife, and had approved of her. She had a long talk with him, and quite won his heart by her "sensible" conversation, and by the offer of a remedy for his mother's rheumatism, for which he was to call at the manse.

"She's the right kind of woman yon," he said to his master and mistress in the evening; "she

doesna talk to a man like a printed book, or as if she knew everything better than himsell, but just cracks doucely and fairly. I'm thinking she'll be a real good wife to the minister."

CHAPTER II.

FLOODED.

MY mother and Tam became fast friends in time, and at last whenever he wanted counsel or help he invariably betook himself to the manse. Even Tibby began to like her visits, at least to tolerate them, mollified by the benefit she had received from my mother's embrocation, and because "the minister's wife wasna aye preach preaching to folk as if everybody was a waur sinner than hersell. If she had been like the auld wife in the manse before her, wha was aye tryin' at her husband's trade, only she didna gang into the poopit, she never would hae got darkening Tibby Taylor's door. But as she's just a gude Christian woman and no a saunt—weel, she can come."

Lang Tam Tamson is a distinct recollection of my early childhood. His height struck me with wonder and respect; and I was doubtful whether

the famous Goliath's could possibly have exceeded it. He was strong as well as tall, and gentle as well as strong. I had such confidence in his powers that when he set me up—a white-faced mite of a child—on his shoulder, which seemed to me a stupendous distance from the earth—about what I now consider Nelson's monument on the Calton hill to be—or held me up at arm's length seated on his broad, open palm, I scarcely felt more than a passing sensation of fear. The muscles which sustained me seemed formed of iron, and as little likely to yield beneath my weight; for Tam's bones and sinews had been braced and strengthened by many stern battles with wintry blasts and snowdrifts when caring for his flock. A shepherd's life in summer is comparatively easy and pleasant, but it is the wild winter days and nights that try his powers and show what stuff he is made of.

The summer that I was twelve years old was a very wet one, not only in our district, but in most parts of Scotland. There were great floods in various places as there had been on former occasions, some rivers from certain causes being more

subject to these overflows than others; but our streams, though always considerably swelled by unusual rains, had never at any time in men's recollection risen to such a degree as to cause alarm. No cottages built on the banks of the Ard and the Tivie, our two streams of some size, and with their sources in the upper moors, had ever suffered from a spate. We were, therefore, greatly surprised one evening to hear that a water-spout had burst among the hills near the source of the Tivie, the consequence of which was that the little river had risen to a height quite unprecedented, though old people now began to remember that in their youth they had heard some dim tradition of a similar flood having taken place on the Ard. That stream was also greatly swelled at present, but nothing to speak of compared with the Tivie.

"Eh! mem!" cried Jess Gillespie, our servant, looking in at the parlour door in a state of great excitement, "there's awfu' news. A' the houses on Tivie side—bethankit they arena mony!—have been flooded the last night wi' an awfu' spate, and the folk had to flee out o' them for their lives wi' naething on them but their sarks. The miller's

dung clean demented (insane), they say, wi' the damage done to the mill, and they say besides that Lang Tam Tamson had to wade through the water up to his middle to reskie his auld flyting mither. Aweel! a pair o' lang legs is no' a bad thing at sic a time. What took Lang Tam to the waist would take stumpy Charlie ower the head, bonnet and a'."

"But how have you learned this, Jess?" asked my mother.

"Ou, just frae the coo-doctor (veterinary surgeon), wha was up at the Telfers, pheesicking ane o' the twa-year aulds, mem," said Jess.

"And are you sure there has been no accident, no loss of life, Jess?" said my mother, anxiously.

"Nane, mem, unless it be Tibby's bees that seem to hae been coupit ower into the water, puir things; and they say Dauvit Muir had his brood sow and a' the wee grumphies washed clean out o' the stye; I reckon they're far on their road to the sea by this time. But neither man, wife, nor wean have tint life, though mony a sair throat and cauld will there be amang them. It's weel we made sae muckle black currant jeelie this year, for they'll be

a' sending to the manse for 't. But James says that the water's a' out o' the houses hours since, though, nae doot, everything maun be wat and uncomfortable in them."

My mother did not go on the following day to inquire for Tibby, for she feared that the stepping-stones by which at ordinary times one could cross the Tivie dryshod, must now be unavailable. But late in the evening, when my father was in his study, Jess Gillespie came to the parlour to announce that Lang Tam was in the kitchen and wanted to see her. My mother was winding a skein of wool, which I was holding for her, at the time. When she had finished, she bade me go to the kitchen and take Tam into a little stone-paved room where she saw any one that came on private business.

Jess was diligently "soopin" the kitchen when I went there, but from the roguish expression of her face and the way in which she flourished her long broom in the neighbourhood of Tam's chair, I strongly suspected that she was more intent on amusing herself with his uneasy looks and movements than zealous in the cause of cleanliness.

Tam, sitting bolt upright, and stowing his long legs as much as possible beneath his chair so as to be out of reach of the implement which Jess wielded with such energy, was muttering with a red face, and in an apologetic tone, when I appeared, "I'm—I'm greatly feared that I'm in your way, my woman."

He was evidently much relieved by getting out of Jess's dominions. Tam modestly took the chair that my mother invited him to in the stone room. He had obviously the idea that to sit at ease in the presence of his betters was not good manners; so, after depositing his broad blue bonnet on the floor at his feet, he balanced himself gravely on the extreme edge of his chair, which uncomfortable if not precarious position he maintained during the whole interview.

"I'm feared, mem," said Tam, casting a troubled glance backward in the direction of the kitchen "I'm real feared that that lass of yours will think me awfu' wanting in civility and discreet manners. But you see, mem, my mother, poor body, canna bear me to speak to any woman that's a wanter; she's so feared for my bringing home a wife and

turning her out of the house. You know, mem, I could never do that; but she's been hard herself all her days, and she winna believe me. And she so speers (questions) and back-speers me when I come home from a place, that I darena look the airt a single woman's on, lest a bird of the air should carry the tidings to her."

I may mention here that Tam's mode of expressing himself, though not his accent, was superior to most Scotchmen of his class. My mother could only account for it by his fondness for reading, and especially by his diligent study of the Holy Scriptures, that "well of English undefiled."

"But how is your mother, Tam? has she suffered from the damp and cold to which she has been exposed?" inquired my mother.

"'Deed, mem, it was just about her that I wanted to speak to you. She's groaning with the rheumatism, and I thought you might be able to give her some more of that stuff that's done her good before."

"I have plenty of it," said my mother, and she rose and unlocked a press which stood in the room.

Two shelves of it were filled with bottles and glass jars of various dimensions, some containing liquids and other medicines in powder. My mother had been taught to compound simples by her father, a medical practitioner of some skill. I am not sure that Tam's respect for my mother was capable of increase; but if so, it certainly then took place as he stared with widely-opened eyes at these wonderful shelves, while she selected the proper liniment for Tibby.

"And now, Tam," said my mother, "you must tell me all particulars about this flood; let me know all that happened to your mother and you."

"That will I, mem," said Tam, cheerfully, "and I think I can tell you all the ins and outs of it. You ken, mem, the Tivie at ordinary times is little bigger than a bit trotting burn, with here and there a deeper pool in it, very convenient in summer for washing the sheep in at the shearing time. Well, you see, mem, when I got home last Monday at e'en, I noticed that the Tivie was very full and drumlie, though no fuller or browner than I have often seen it after such heavy rains as we have had. You ken our bit housie stands some-

what on the brae, say half a dozen yards or so from the bed of the burn; but the brae is that easy to climb that my mother, failed as she is thinks nothing of carrying a gang of water up it on a washing day. That's extra water, you see, for I regularly fill her water stoups for her every morning before I leave. Maybe we may stand two feet, or a wee thought more, higher than the chucky stones that are oftener dry than wet at the side of the burn; and I never before saw the Tivie, though at its fullest, do more than fill its whole bed; and it was just doing that on Monday at e'en when I got to the house.

"Well, my mother and me are early folk, for I darena for the life of me be out after nightfall, or she would believe I was away at the coorting; so after we had had our supper and read our chapter we went away quietly to our beds. As you've been often in our house, mem, you will have noticed that one of our beds is greatly higher than the other. That's mine. My mother finds it convenient to put any odd thing that's no just directly needed between the boards and my caff (chaff) bed, as she says my legs are long enough

to speel up. I dinna deny it, mem," continued Tam, stretching out his right leg and regarding it critically; "but a man's legs may be long and yet be as sensible of what's hard and soft as any other body's. I'm no of a complaining turn of mind, mem, but when my mother puts everything, from bundles of old claes that she cannot find in her heart to part with, to sticks that she picks up on the road—I hope she doesna steal them from the farm fences—under my bed,—well, mem, I canna say that I'm just as comfortable as if they werena there."

"I quite agree with you, Tam," said my mother.

"But you see, mem, I'm such an awful sound sleeper—my mother's aye flyting on me for my snoring—that when I'm once cwer, I ken nothing about what I'm lying on; and it's no easy thing to get me wakened till the right time come. So that night, after putting out the light, which aye falls to me to do, I got into my bed, and prodding it well ower till I had found out the softest place, I wasna long of being in the land of Nod.

"I canna tell how many hours I had been sleeping, but I was dreaming that I was lying under a

whin-bush on the hillside, with the thunder rattling awfully above and around me, when I suddenly started wide waken to find that my mother was as hoarse as a corbie with screaming to me, and that she was drumming with her two nieves on the board between our beds as if she wanted to bring it down.

"'What's the matter?' says I.

"'Matter!' says she, 'ye lazy, useless loon, lyin' rowtin' there, when either the house is gaun to fa' or something else dreadfu's about to happen.'

"'Hoots! mother, you must be dreaming,' says I.

"'Dreaming, say ye, ye muckle gowk?' says she. 'A' the brains ye hae are in thae lang legs o' yours. I tell ye there's something by-ordinary gaun on, baith in the house and out o't. Hear to that, ye sumph! the vera chairs and things seem as if they were possesst, and hae taken to knockin ilkither; and the rain maun be as if the vera heavens are opened; Gude send that we're no in for anither flood! for I heard the fire fizz, fizz, fizzin' till the gaitherin' peat went clean out wi' the water that maun hae come down the lum. Rise up, I tell ye, and licht the lamp, and see what a' this steer's aboot!'

"'Well, mother, I'll do your bidding,' said I, 'but you must let me pull on my breeks and stockings first, for it's bad to step out o' one's warm bed on a cold stone floor.' It's very apt, mem, to give a body a sore inside," said Tam, confidentially apart to my mother. "Well, mem," he resumed, "as my mother and me have just one place to live in, we aye take off our claes and put them on in our beds—mine lie at the foot o' my bed. But I just leave you to judge for yourself, mem, when a man has to feel first for his stockings and then for his breeks in the dark, with his head all the time dunt, dunting against the cupples in the roof above him, and a woman's tongue flyte flyting on him,—I just ask you, mem, whether you think it possible that a man, wakened out o' his sleep as I was, could be very fast?"

"I should think not, indeed, Tam," said my mother, smiling.

"Well, mem," continued Tam, evidently comforted by my mother's agreement with him, "I got on my things at last, and out over the bed I slid myself; but no sooner had my feet touched the floor than I gave such a roar as I thought

would have turned my mother clean wud (frantic) altogether.

"'What's the matter wi' ye noo, ye muckle roarin' gomeril?' says she.

"'Matter,' says I, 'I think a man may well roar when he steps out o' his warm bed into cold water as high as his houghs,' says I.

"'Water?' says she.

"'Ay, water!' says I; 'and though you're clean wrong about another flood, mother, as we have a sure promise anent it, still, there must something extraordinary have happened to the Tivie.'

"Haud your tongue, and licht the lamp,' says she.

"'Well, well,' says I. 'I'll do my best; but if all the things that are sooming about the house were rapping against your legs as they're rapping against mine the now, you wouldna find it so easy, mother, to make your way to the bole for the lamp. You had better rise yourself, put on your things, and get up on my high bed, for if the water goes on rising you'll be sooming out on the top o' yours before all's done.'

"At that my mother gave a loud groan; but I

heard her begin to search for something about the roof of her bed, and then to put on her things. And 'deed it was time. We aye have been in the habit of keeping the lamp standing in the bole at the fireside beside poor old Ailie's big Bible; and it was well for us we were, for though the water had risen higher than the fire, it wanted an inch or two of the bole. But oh, mem, it's no easy job to handle flint and steel while you're standing in water up to the hainches! And then the wick needed sorting, and the oil was low, and all the time my mother was yaumer, yaumering from her bed, and crying on me to come and rescue her from drowning. I got the lamp lighted at last, but it burnt so dimly that I knew unless the morning soon broke—and I couldna see the wag-at-the-wall (Dutch clock) distinctly enough to know the hour—we would soon be in darkness again, for the oil-can had soomed away like other things, and I could see nothing o't.

"Such a sight as I saw, mem, when I looked round about me! everything but the dresser—and it was aye giving the other lurch—was floating, from my mother's old kist that holds all our wear-

ing claes to her carpet shoon that were bobbing up and down like wee boats. As for my own shoon that I had so carefully creeshed the night before, they were so heavy with tackets, besides being the biggest in the parish, the souter (shóemaker) says, that they had never stirred from their place, and I managed to fish them out of the water, and put them on by leaning my back against the wall and tilting up my legs turn about. Eh! what a splashing I made, and how my mother scolded."

And Tam stopped to laugh heartily, in which we joined him.

"Well, mem," he continued, when this was over, "there was poor baudrons crooching close to the wall on the top of the dresser, and the creature up with a pitiful *miow* when she saw me. I suppose the bit beestie's instinct had made her take refuge on the highest thing in the house when the water first came sooking in under the door. My bed's higher, but she knows she's never allowed to be there; cats are such breeders of fleas. But she so miowed and miowed that I couldna bear it; so I waded through the water, making a bonnie commotion at every stride I took, and causing some

o't to dash up in my mother's face, to her great anger, and for once laid pussy on the top of my bed. Eh, mem, wasna our strong door a mercy! If it had burst in with the weight of the water instead of just letting it sook in gradually, the whole house and us in't might have been carried down the Tivie.

"I think the thing that vexed my mother more than anything was to see our meal barrel, with two pecks of meal in it, floating on its side in the water The lid, which was a bad fit, had worked itself off, and all the meal was washed out except a pickle, that stuck to the bottom like a poultice. And then there were the peats—all we had to serve us till the new ones were ready. My mother, to keep them dry, aye builds them under our beds. She had used up the ones under hers, and a good feck of mine too, so that the water got soaking and creeping in among them that were left, till at last they took to the sooming too, and floated out from under the bed like so many dead rattons. I couldna but laugh at one thing, though it sore angered my mother to see me do't; but I'll warrant you would have laughed yourself, mem, if you had

been there. It was seeing the antics of our two water stoups. They are broad in the bottom and narrow in the mouth, so they keepit very upright in the water, just half a yard separate, and they bobbit here and they friskit there, and they set to each other as in a reel with the motion that I had made in the water, till I could contain myself no longer; but though I was wet and cold, and sore taigled with my mother's yaumering, I laughed till the very tears came down my cheeks.

"Well, I saw nothing could be done till morning came. I looked out at the front window, but all I could make out was the rapid rushing of some dark thing, with here and there a faint streak of light on it, made, I suppose, by the articles it had licked up on its road. I couldna tell its height, but, from the quantity of water in the house, I judged it would be nearly up to the window, which will be about four feet or more from the ground, and therefore it would be six feet deep in the bed of the burn. If the water continued to rise, I could not but think we would be in considerable jeopardy; but of course I said nothing about that to my mother. If I had had just myself to care for, I would have

run the risk of forcing my way through the roof, and dropping down from it at the back of the house, where the water could not but be shallower on account of the brae. But, you see, I couldna leave my mother, and I feared to open the door and wade with her through the darkness, for if I had couped over anything that the flood had brought down, she might have fallen off my back and been whurrled away by the force of the water. I am sure she suspected me of meaning to leave her, for after I had lifted her up on my bed she wouldna be content unless I stood close beside her. Then she locked her arms tight round my neck and stuck out a foot on each side of me, so that if I moved from the bedside I must have taken her with me. I promised her over and over that if she wouldna keep so close a grip of me, but let me stand at liberty and draw my breath freely, I wouldna stir from beside her till she gave me leave. But no, she had no trust in me, poor body, and I had just to submit.

"And oh, mem! you can scarcely conceive what a hard thing it was to stand there, with my legs almost senseless from the cold water, counting

every five minutes to be ten, and angry with the clock when it struck and proved I was wrong; and all the time an old wife clutching hold of me, and scolding and banning as if I was the cause of the whole danger and destruction. I thought sometimes I would get clean demented with it all, though if my mother could but have held her tongue I could have borne anything else; for oh! she's an awful woman for a temper, my mother!

"Mem, she was so aggravatin' that a dreadful temptation came into my mind. It wasna once and away merely, but it came back again and again, as if I was possessed. I'll tell you about it, mem, though I may truly be ashamed to come over't. Mem, I was that wearied with my mother's constant yaup yauping close to my ears—and standing long in water saps the heart, as it were, out of a man—that I thought if I sat down in't with her on my back and gave her a good dooking it might stop her tongue, though nothing else would. The temptation was so strong that I found my knees again and again crooking down under me, and at last I could only get strength against it with constantly repeating the fifth commandment

"I knew nothing about my father—I reckon he had been my mother's master during their short married life, and that she couldna bear to speak of him—well, I couldna honour him whom I had neither seen nor heard tell of; but here was my mother, and whatever she was, I was commanded to honour her. And surely, thought I, dooking the poor body canna be called honouring her. And would you believe it, mem, I hadna done this long before I began to feel such a pity for the poor old wife in my heart that, instead of dooking her, I felt I couldna do enough to make her comfortable."

"That was right, Tam," said my mother, approvingly.

"But oh, mem, it was a richt heartsome thing, the first peep of day stealing in through the east window. As I had expected, the lamp had soon burned out, and we had been long in darkness. The light showed me that I was right in a thing I had begun to suspect, that the water had begun to fall. I saw from the wet mark on the plaister that it had already fallen half-a-foot, my mother's bed had been flooded, but the water had not got up to mine.

"'And now, mother,' says I, after telling her the good news, 'you must just let me put a blanket round you, for now that it's daylight I can wade fine through the water, and I'll carry you up to the farm, and then I'll come back here and try to put things to rights as far as I can.' Well, men, she was that worn out with fright and talking together, that she didna object; so off I set with her, my legs feeling very queer and shaky at first. I had much ado to get the door opened, and afterwards to shut it, to keep our bits of things from sailing out; but all the time my mother clung like a cat to my back. Such a sight as the Tivie was! It was running like a mill lade, and just covered with things that it had carried off promiscuously, which showed that our neighbours up the water must have suffered worse than ourselves. I stachered on as I best could; and as my road lay up the brae, every step brought me into shallower water. No' a soul was stirring when we reached the farm; but I wakened them up, and they were kind to my mother and me. They put her into a warm bed, and gave her a warm drink, that did her muckle good. I'm no

dram-drinker, mem, as you ken, but the mistress made me take a glass of whisky to drive the cold from my heart; and it was the best physic I ever had in my life.

"Well, mem, my story's all but done now. The spate soon ran itself out, and by the middle of the day the house was clear of water. But, oh, such a dirt and wastrie as it left behind it. The mistress gave me a creel of peats to make a fire to dry the walls; but they'll no be soon dried. And there's my mother groaning already to get back. She canna put up with strangers; and she'll no be content unless she gets home the morn, though I think myself it will be her death. But I must be stepping, mem," said Tam, picking up his bonnet, and rising; "many thanks to you for the ointment, and maybe you'll look in on the old wife when it's convenient. Maister Matthew," whispering to me, "do you think you could see me as far as to the kitchen door?" So I escorted Tam safely past Jess Gillespie to the open air.

Tam little thought when he gave utterance to it that his prognostication concerning his mother

was to be fulfilled to the very letter. He was certain she would suffer from returning to the cottage before it was thoroughly dried; but of course he anticipated nothing worse. We are all apt at times to speak of death in a loose and unreflecting way. Death was really in Tibby's cup. The fright and exposure to which she had been subjected might have terminated only in a temporary illness if she had not persisted in her purpose. The damp proved fatal to her. She was seized with rheumatic fever, and notwithstanding all the skill of the medical man who was called in to her aid, her vital powers became quickly exhausted. She died as she had lived, a hard, unawakened, self-sufficing woman. She gave no response to my father's admonitions and prayers, though she seemed to listen to them. My mother visited her more than once, taking with her little delicacies to tempt the sick woman's appetite, and dropping, as she had opportunity, words of gentle but faithful counsel; but Tibby turned her face to the wall, and remained silent. And though Tam, however awkward, was one of the most patient and unselfish of nurses, spending

every leisure minute by his mother's bedside, doing without sleep and almost without food, she was harsh and unloving as ever to him.

Tam was sitting sad and weary, but, as usual, patient and uncomplaining, by her bedside the night before her death, when, after a long silence, broken only by her groans, she suddenly spoke to him.

"Is there onybody there but yoursell?" she asked in a feeble voice. How different to Tibby's former accents! Tam had to stoop over her to catch the words.

"Nobody, mother," said her son.

"Weel, they tell me I'm deein; and I ken it's true. I suppose ye maun get it then, as I canna tak it wi' me. Rax your airm up to the roof o' the bed, and put your haund as far back as ye can get it into a hole in the corner abune my head, and bring oot what ye fin' there."

Tam did as she desired, and drew out an old stocking, well secured round the mouth with string, which felt heavy in his hand.

"There suld be aboot forty punds in't, pairt in notes and pairt in silver—and ye can tak it,"

gasped Tibby with a groan, partly, no doubt, from pain, but partly also perhaps from being compelled to yield up her treasured savings to another; "but ye'll be sure to gie me a respectable burial oot o't."

"Mother," said Tam, with I doubt not great feeling, "you'll get not only a decent burial, but I'll put up a headstane to your memory."

"Aweel—ye can dae that if ye like; I'm just as enteetled to't as ony in the kirkyard," said Tibby, evidently pleased with the promise; "ask wha ye like to the burial except auld Sandy Jardine, or ony o' his folk—I havena forgotten how his wife spak up to me lang syne."

"Oh, mother," said Tam, in a disapproving tone, "mind if we dinna forgive, we'll no be forgiven."

"Aweel, I winna say that I dinna forgie her," groaned Tibby, with manifest reluctance; "but for a that, mind there's nane o' them to be asked to my burial."

They were her last words. She sank into a state of unconsciousness, and died as the light of a new day broke over the hills.

CHAPTER III.

LANG TAM SEES HIS FUTURE WIFE.

MY mother was greatly concerned for Tam after his mother's death. He lived alone in his cottage, she heard, with no one to prepare his food and bear him company. She could not understand how he contrived; and after some weeks she sought an opportunity of inquiring at himself by visiting him on the sheep-walk.

"Well, mem," said Tam, "I canna truly say that I'm altogether comfortable as to meat and such like. When I come home at e'en, sometimes wet and cold—for oh, it's been a sore dreeping season this, trying to both beast and body!—I'll maybe find the fire black out, though I had happit it so as to last the whole day, as I thought. Then I have it to kinnle, and when that's done I must make my parritch before I can sup them; and they used always to be ready for me in my mother's

time. I'm an awful parritch supper, mem; my mother complained that I took the meat of two folk—for, poor body, she liked ill to see the meal barrel get low. But somehow my parritch-making never turns out right; they're either ower thick or ower thin, or, worst of all, they're burnt; and it needs as hungry a stomach as mine generally is to swallow burnt parritch.

"And then, though I give the house a sooping, it never has a clean, well-redd-up look. No that my mother was very particular—outdoor workers seldom are—but she kept it better than me. Somehow I canna get the way o't. Our ploughman's wife does my washing for me; and I've learnt to darn my stockings and mend my things myself, and to bake cakes. No, I'm no that bad a hand at the cakes. I aye toast them well, and they eat fine with a whang o' cheese for my dinner on the hillside. And, as you see, I have a clear, wee, poppling well close by here to take a drink at, for cakes and cheese are dry meat, and need a deal of slokening. I dinna pretend to say, mem, that I have many creature comforts to brag of, though I should be thankful that I have a roof

over my head, and enough of meat, such as it is, to fill my stomach. But oh, mem," continued Tam, "I think little o' these discomforts I have mentioned, compared with the peace and quietness that there's now in the house. We shouldna speak ill of the dead, mem; but everybody knew my poor mother's infirmity. I tell you, mem," said Tam, with a sudden change in his voice, and speaking with great impressiveness, "I think the house now must be almost as quiet as heaven."

"But how do you make out that heaven is so quiet, Tam?" said my mother, curious to know his thoughts on the subject; "is it not written, 'They serve Him day and night in His temple,' and surely that must mean the service of praise as well as of action?"

"Doubtless, mem, doubtless," said Tam, with alacrity; "it's in the Revelations—I ken the verse." He paused for some moments, and looked as if trying to reconcile the two ideas, but apparently without success. "I canna tell how it is, mem," he said at last, "but it's my persuasion they're both true. Mem, there must be quietness in heaven," he added, raising his voice, and be-

stowing a sounding slap on his right leg; "I *ken* there must be."

"Well, Tam, there are peace and love and harmony there, and that, I am sure, is what you mean," said my mother. "But now, Tam," she went on, "I must speak seriously to you about your present condition; I have been wanting to do it for some time."

"Ay, mem?" said Tam, in a surprised tone.

"Tam, you cannot go on living in this uncomfortable way; you must really begin to look out for a wife."

"Me, mem—a wife!" said Tam, ruefully, scratching his head, as his custom was when the inside of it was perplexed.

"There are many respectable young women in the parish," said my mother, who was determined not to be discouraged, "and surely you must be able to pick out a good wife from among them. Every one knows that you are a well-principled, steady man, and that you were one of the best of sons; so she would be a foolish woman that would refuse you."

"Ay, mem," said Tam, slowly and thoughtfully;

"but you really never ken a woman till after she's married, and it's an awful risk. Some lassies can be as meek as a spring lamb till they have gotten a house o' their ain and a man to work for them. But when they've got that—ou then, they're just as ill-tempered and hard to manage as our old tup (ram) yonder, that's aye butting with his horns, and takes both the dowgs and me to keep him in order. See to him the now, mem—that's him down the hillside with the long twisted horns—just see how he's fighting with his neighbour this very minute! Hoy! Tivie, lad," he called to one of his dogs, and pointed to the combatants, "yonder's work for you."

The dog started up at his master's call, and obeying the direction of his eye and extended arm, was instantly on the spot indicated. He soon separated the animals, and drove the culprit some distance from his quieter rival. Returning then to his former station, he again laid himself down to doze, though every now and then he would rouse himself to examine if all continued right.

"Ay, he's a clever fellow, Tivie, Maister Mat-

thew," said Tam, evidently gratified with the notice I was bestowing upon his favourite dog; "there's many a man with no half his sense, I often think. Well, mem," he continued, turning to my mother and resuming the subject which this little incident had interrupted, "I would rather mend claes and sup burnt parritch all my days than run the risk of getting a do-less, scolding wife."

"But all wives don't turn out lazy and scolds, Tam," said my mother.

"I dinna say they do, mem; there's many a good wife and mother in this world. No to speak of such as yourself, mem, and the leddy at Ha'craigs, isna there poor Betty Johnstone, the wabster's (weaver's) ailing wife, down by yonder? Who ever hears Betty complain, though she's so weakly and has such a fight with her big family? It seems to me as if the poorest folk have aye the most bairns. No doubt, if they can struggle through, and if they bring them up in the fear of God, the bairns prove a blessing in the end; so that things are after all equally balanced. But poor Betty must have a hard life of it the now to keep them all so clean and respectable. What a

darning and patching and washing she must have! for no one of them is able to do anything for itself but the oldest laddie, who got a herding the other day. Ay, a wife like Betty would be a grand thing for a man to get.

"But then, Mrs. Morrison, mem, there's Jamsie Stewart, the hind at the Netherleas', wife. She was as trig and well-pleasing a lass before Jamsie married her as you could see anywhere. They say now that she had aye a bad temper, but that her friends kept it quiet. Well, Jamsie, poor fellow, married her. And now what is she? a dirty, draggle-tailed, long-tongued hizzy, aye wasting her time in her neighbours' houses, and neglecting her man and bairn. And now Jamsie's growing dour and ill-tempered himsell; and the folk about them hear them constantly quarrelling. He was as steady a lad when he married her as a man could be, but now I'm aye expecting to hear that he's taken to frequent the public-house, for it must be a strong temptation, the public, to a man who has nothing better than a dirty house, a crying wean, and a flyting wife to come home to."

"Well, Tam," said my mother, "rather than get

such a wife as that you would certainly be better to sup bad porridge all your days, and live without company too."

"Company, mem!" said Tam, in a triumphant tone, as if he thought my mother was beginning to yield to his arguments; "I have plenty of company. There's the dowgs! My mither, poor body, couldna bear them in the house—I think she grudged their meat—and they had aye to be quartered at the farmhouse. But now they always follow me home, and they're grand company. I mind once getting a book the lend of to read about a shipwrecked sailor, who was cast, the only living man of all the crew, on a desert island far away in the lonely ocean. And it tells all about his queer plans and contrivances, and how he made a dwelling-place to himself that was half a cave and half a bower, for he planted it round with trees that grew so fast and thick in that hot country, that they became stronger than a stone wall in the end. You wouldna believe what an interestin' book it is, mem! I only wish I could get another sight o't; but the man it belonged to has gone to Ameriky. Eh! Maister Matthew, do

you really say that you have the very book and that you'll lend it to me? Well, I'm sure, that's kind.

"Well, mem, you'll mind, as you've read the book, that he didna want for company. He was able to soom out to the wreck for things he had need of; and many things he brought away with him on a bit raft he made—for he must have been a real clever chap—and among them was a cat and dowg. And then he catched a young poll-parrot, and learnt it to speak; and he used to sit in his bit housie with all his family, as he called them, about him, and was just as happy as a king. Now, mem, when I'm sitting by the fireside at night, with the dowgs and cat—for she has got over her fear of them, and they never stir her—lying on the hearthstone beside me, I canna help likening myself to Robinson Crusoe. Only, you see, I have many advantages that he hadna. At times he had great yirnings, poor fellow, as was natural, for the company of his fellow-creatures; but I have no want of that. I'm seldom long alone, except at night, and I dinna mind that. There's the folk at the farm; and unless the

maister's away on business, he's sure to be up the hill some time through the day to speak to me. And neighbours are often crossing the braes, and they're sure to rest beside me for a crack. What way, then, should I seek a wife for company?"

"You might seek one for comfort, however, Tam," said my mother; "you are a strong man now, but a constant diet of burnt porridge will hurt even your constitution; and you may yet feel that to have a wife to nurse you is something."

"There's no gainsaying that, mem," said Tam, gravely, "for I havena a blood relation, that I ken of, in the world; and we must all look forward to disease and death itself; 'there's no discharge in that war,' as the Bible says."

"Then will you promise to think over what I have said to you, Tam?" said my mother, as she rose to go; "and it can do you no harm to try and gather some information about the young women in the neighbourhood—you can surely manage that without creating suspicion?"

"Brawly, mem, brawly," said Tam, with a good-natured laugh; "I have just to listen to what the

lassies say of each other behind their backs. And I promise you, mem, that I'll think well over your words."

We saw nothing of Tam, except in church, for more than a month after this conversation, and after the winter had fairly set in; but at the end of that time we had him again seated on the edge of his chair—on this occasion by candlelight—in the stone room. As usual, I made the third in the company. Tam seemed to have no hesitation in speaking before me, and it is from my own recollections as much as my mother's that I am able to recall these singular conversations. My mother felt certain from Tam's looks that he had some important communication to make to her, and sought to help him out with it.

"Well, Tam," said she, kindly, "have you been thinking about the advice I gave you the last time we met?"

"'Deed have I, mem," said Tam, with great heartiness; "and it's just because of it that I am here the night. I'm sore in want of somebody that's wiser and more learned than myself—for I ken I'm but a poor, ignorant, borrel man, mem—

to make something clear to me; and I thought you would maybe ask the minister about it, for I dinna just like to speak to him myself."

"I am sure the minister will be glad to explain anything that perplexes you, Tam," said my mother, wondering what theological difficulty was disturbing poor honest Tam's mind. I really think she felt something of the tenderness of a mother towards Tam, whose simple piety and worth she warmly appreciated.

"Well, mem, I'll make a clean breast of it to you. You see it was queer enough that just the night after our talk on the hill I had to make a call, to oblige a neighbour, on old John Bisset, a mile and a half down Tivie water. I had often met with John, who's a decent, God-fearing man, that keeps up the worship of God in his house, and has brought up his family creditably; but I had never been within his door till that nicht. John hadna come in from his work when I called; but the gudewife made me come in and sit down, saying she expected him every minute. However, her and me had a good half-hour's crack before he got home. She was very free and frank in her

manner, and she tell't me all about her family, as if I had been an old friend. She had two sons in Canada, she said, doing well, and two daughters at home. The youngest, a fine stout lassie, worked with her father as his bondager; and the eldest one—and she looked as she spoke at a quiet, sensible like lass, who was sitting working a stocking on a stool fronting the clock, that she every now and then gave the other keek up to—did all the work of the house—all the cleaning, and washing, and baking, and making ready of meat; besides that she could work a man's stocking in the day, she was so clever with the wires. And I didna wonder to hear it, for her fingers moved as quick as lightning itself.

"I said, mem, that it did the young woman credit, and that I had never seen such a clean house. It was the truth, mem; every plate and bowl on the bink was shining with cleanness, and the very pot-lids and the bit milk-can that hung on nails on the wall were scoured till they were like silver. As for the floor, you might have supped your parritch off it. But it struck me as very queer that the mother should be so free in

praising her daughter before her face to a stranger, and that the lass should take no notice of what was said about her, no even by a look, but just work on at her stocking, with aye the other glance up at the clock to see what the time was.

"I saw she couldna be silly, for a pair of gleger een were never seen in a woman's head; they seemed to notice everything, though she wasna forward in her manners. I was wondering about it, when after another look at the clock up she rises from her stool, puts away her stocking, strips her short-gown sleeves up her sonsy arms, and falls to the making of the parritch for their suppers. She did it so cleverly, and made so little stir about it, that I couldna help watching her to get a lesson.

"'I hope I'm no in your road," says I, out of civility, and drawing my chair a wee bit back from the fireside; but though she gave a glance at me then, no a word said she. I looked at her mother, and I saw *she* was looking hard at me with the tears in her een. 'What's the matter with them both?' thinks I; 'I'm sure I said nothing that

could affront anybody.' And I began to wish sore that the old man would come in.

"'I thought,' said the mother at last, in a quiet voice, 'that you would have kent about puir Susy's infirmity.'

"I just sat and stared wonderingly at her, but no a word could I think of to say.

"'Did you never hear that my Susy there, clever as you may see she is, was a dummy?' says the mother."

And here Tam paused, and with great significance stared fixedly at my mother for about half a minute.

"A dummy, Tam!" she exclaimed, utterly astonished and bewildered by this information, and by the importance which Tam evidently attached to it.

"Ay, just a dummy, mem, that can neither hear nor speak, contradict nor flyte at ye. Do you no think, mem," continued Tam, mysteriously sinking his voice, as if dealing with something strange and supernatural, "that there was what a man may call a special providence in my being asked to make that visit so soon after seeing you, and when

your words were working like barm (yeast) in my head? And then if John Bisset had been in at first, a minute or two would have done all my business with him; and I would never have had that crack with the gudewife, or heard about Susy's good qualities, and found out that—" and here Tam touched his ears and tongue.

"Oh, Tam, surely——"

"Hear me out, mem, before you speak—I ken what you are going to say, but hear me out. 'I never heard o't,' said I to the mother, 'and nobody could believe it of such a clever, purpose-like woman.' And then it just flashed into my mind that here was the very wife I was wanting; one well brought up, come of respectable folk, clever about a house, and sure never to be a flyter. Well, as I was thinking this, in came John and his younger daughter from their work. I delivered my message to the old man, and got the answer; and then wishing them all good-night, I was coming away. But the old folk wouldna hear of it; there was nobody waiting for me at home, they said, and I must stay and take my supper with them. And they were so very kind and

pressing, that I couldna but sit down again among them.

"John and me had a fine crack; but I always kept watching Susy with the tail of my een. I took notice how cleanly she made and dished up the parritch, no a black mote to be seen in them; and when we came to sup them with the sweet milk that the younger daughter Mary had brought in with her, I thought the king and queen themselves might have licked their lips after them. Then when we were done Susy gathered all the dishes together, washed them smartly up, and set them in their places, cleaned the table, put some peats on the fire, and then drew in her stool to the fireside and took to her stocking again. But instead of looking up at the clock now, I saw she was aye taking the other look at me, as if she was trying to make out what kind of body I was. After a while we had family worship, and I watched what she would do then—her that could neither hear the Scriptures nor sing the praises of God. Mem, she was as still and reverent as any o' us, never taking her een off her father's face when he was reading, and kneeling down and

covering hers at the prayer, as if she really had some notion of whom he was addressing.

"Well, mem, after the worship I came away. They tell't me very kindly no to be a stranger, but to drop in and see them whenever I was that road. And I winna deny, mem, that I have been there gey and often during the last month. I wait till think their supper will be bye before I go in. Sometimes Mary's out in a neighbour's house, and the old man taking a sleep in his chair when I go in, and then I get a quiet talk with the gudewife, which I like best. And I have seen Susy ironing, and baking, and doing everything a woman should be fit to do in her gudeman's house. And she's getting real well acquaint with me, mem, and I think she likes me no that ill already——"

"Oh, Tam!"

"Hear me out, mem—I just ask you to hear me out," said Tam, lifting up his great hand beseechingly. "You would miss me out of the kirk maybe last Sabbath. I wasna misspending the Lord's day, mem. No, no. You see, *they* belong to Mr. Tait's parish; and, thinks I, though I dinna like to leave my own minister, I'll away and give Mr.

Tait a hearing the day, and see for myself how Susy behaves in a kirk. I took care to be early, and I chose a seat in a dark corner where I couldna easily be seen, and which I found, by asking the betheral, had a good view of John's seat. Well, mem, you would never have kent that Susy was a dummy by her behaviour. She sat with her head a wee cast down during the singing and reading—not staring about her as many folk do that havena her excuse; and at the prayers she was as quiet and douce-like as her father himself. As for the sermon, she never turned her look from the minister all the time o't—and he gives you a good screed of doctrine Mr. Tait, never less than an hour and twenty minutes—except to glance up at her father's face as if to see how he liked it."

I suppose Tam feared that my mother was about to expostulate with him again, for once more he held up his hand in a deprecating way.

"I'm no just done yet, mem," he pleaded; "and besides, I have to tell you the thing that's troubling me. Mem, I have opened my mind to the old wife; I have tell't her all my objections to marrying just as plain as I tell't them to you, at

the same time confessing that I have great need of a wife. 'Now,' says I to her, 'there's Susy here —she's cleverer with her hands than most women that have all their senses, and I'm safe that she'll no turn out a scolding wife. Anybody can see,' says I, 'that she's been well brought up by her parents'—and I saw her mother was very pleased at that—'and I think if Susy could be got to take me, you and her father no objecting, we might get on real well together. I ken I couldna be but kind to her—I could never be hard on beast or body all my days; and nobody could say that I wasna kind to my mother, though she had a tongue and a temper that would have tried even the very best of folk to put up with. And I canna but think,' says I, 'that there was a special providence in my coming to your house the night that you tell't me so much about Susy. You see, my head was just filled at the time with what Mrs. Morrison had said to me, and her words were very weighty and powerful.'

"'The house is no great things the now,' says I to her, 'for all the plenishing, except the beds and bedding that I bought myself, belonged to old

Ailie. But I have five-and-twenty pounds over of my mother's savings, though I gave her a most respectable burial, and raised a head-stone to her memory, besides getting a good shute of black claes from the tailor that'll last all my days. Now,' says I, 'five-and-twenty pounds will make the house very comfortable with what's in't already, and buy a good Sabbath-day's gown and shawl for Susy, and either the one or other to yourself as a marriage present.'

"Well, mem, the mother listened very civilly to all that I had to say, and said she would mention it to the gudeman, and that they would take the thing into consideration. She said besides —and I took it as a kind of encouragement—that Susy had often been a great thought to John and her. They never expected her to marry; and as they were both getting up in years, they couldna be long spared to make a home for her; and they feared she mightna be kindly treated after they were gone, for Mary would likely marry, and her man might object to have a sister-in-law in his house, or there might be no room for her there. She advised me to think well about it myself;

and said if after that I continued in the same mind, and John was agreeable, she could easily get Susy to understand the matter, for she was very quick at the uptake, and would often laugh at her sister when her lad dropped in at night. 'She kens weel enough what he comes for,' says the old wife, with a wink to me.

"There's only one thing about it that troubles me, mem," added Tam, "and it's that that I would like to get the minister's opinion on before the matter goes further; you see it only came into my head last night, or I would have been here earlier. Do you think, mem," suddenly breaking the even thread of his story, and sinking his voice into a perturbed whisper, "do you think now that she's a haythen?"

"A heathen, Tam?"

"Ay, mem, a haythen. Now I could never marry a haythen."

My mother was extremely perplexed. Tam's whole communication had been so strange and unexpected—ending, too, with this startling question—that she did not know how to answer him. As she afterwards acknowledged, she could not but

feel, as he proceeded from one particular to another, that there was a certain fitness in the proposed marriage. The family were evidently highly respectable; and the woman, from her activity, cleanliness, and orderly habits, would, no doubt, make Tam's house a very different place from what it had ever been. And if he was quite resolved to marry no other woman for fear of getting a "flyter" on his hands—why, then, it was better for him to marry this deaf and dumb girl, who could not offend in that way, than go on living as he had been doing. If Tam himself was indifferent to the talk such a marriage was sure to create, no other need be troubled about it. And as my mother weighed the whole matter in her mind, it was wonderful—viewing the marriage, of course, from Tam's standpoint, and taking his habits into consideration—how her objections began to melt away. She would not have recommended it; but it was better for Tam than to continue as he was, she thought. She was much amused at his description of the way in which he set himself to study the girl's character, especially the propriety of her behaviour in church. But it was all in keep-

ing with the perfect simplicity and yet practical sagacity of his character. Of course, these thoughts passed through my mother's mind more rapidly than I can write them.

"What do you mean exactly by a heathen, Tam?" she asked.

"Do you think, mem, that she kens that there's a God, and that there's another world beyond this?" said Tam, very gravely.

Here was Tam's difficulty, and one that my mother felt she could not easily answer. She was thoughtful for some minutes, and then rising, she said, "Wait here till I return, Tam; Matthew will keep you company. I will speak to Mr. Morrison about it, and I have no doubt he will make it plain to you." She was absent nearly half an hour, and when she returned my father accompanied her. He had a slight smile on his face, but he had a high opinion of Tam's worth, and he spoke kindly and encouragingly to him. Tam, however, was much confused at sight of the minister.

"Well, Thomas," said my father, "Mrs. Morrison has told me all about this marriage. I do not

think your difficulty—your only one in the matter, I understand—need trouble you seriously."

"Do you really think so, sir?" said Tam, looking greatly relieved.

"The young woman cannot properly be called a heathen," continued my father, "for a heathen, according to the Scriptural definition of the name, is not an individual who merely does not know God, but is one who worships false deities. I need only remind one who knows his Bible so well as you do of the heathen nations whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. Each of these nations had its own peculiar idols, you remember; and they that were left of them were the means of tempting the Israelites to fall into similar idolatry, which ended in their being cast out of the good land the Lord had given them. Now this poor deaf and dumb girl has had some of the human gates of knowledge shut to her through no fault of her own. She is not a greater sinner than we because she suffers this deprivation; and we must be careful in judging such a case and limiting the Lord. He can communicate with the soul in a way which we cannot comprehend. From the

reverence of her behaviour at family worship and in church she has evidently some idea—very vague and indistinct it may be—of an unseen and yet present Being. And my opinion is that if you are determined on this marriage, Thomas—this religious difficulty being removed, and the girl found to comprehend the nature of the marriage vow—your friends have nothing to do but to express their best wishes for your comfort and happiness in it."

I think I was as pleased to hear my father's decision as Tam himself. The latter could not readily find words to express his feelings, and my father, to relieve him, shook hands and left the room.

"I'm sure, mem," said Tam, when again alone with us, "I scarcely ken what to say about your and the minister's kindness. To think of him coming so freely to speak to me on such a subject! But you see, mem, it was a case of conscience, that's it. Well, what a thing learning is!" stooping down his great length to pick up his bonnet, for Tam, out of respect to his minister, had stood during the interview with him: "I had always a great regard for learning all my days, and I'll have

more regard for it now than ever. The Egyptians worshipped calves, that did they, poor benighted creatures! Just think of anybody in their senses worshipping a four-legged beast like our old tup! And the very Israelites themselves learnt bad ways from the folk about them, as the minister minded me, till they went so far as to burn their own bairns in the fire to their idols. And me to compare poor Susy to the likes of them! Hoot, mem! I'm just downright ashamed of myself, and that's the plain truth."

CHAPTER IV.

LET THEM WONDER.

IT was not in the nature of woman not to be curious about the progress of this singular courtship; and not very long after Tam's visit to the manse, my mother and I took our after-dinner walk along the hills, on some ridge of which Tam was sure to be feeding his flock.

We could never be certain, however, of finding him at leisure; we often found him too busy for more than a passing word. For instance, there were the shearing and branding times every year; and if disease appeared among the sheep, the shepherd had sometimes a hard time of it. And portions of the flock had occasionally to be separated from the rest for the markets; and this, though with the aid of men and dogs, was often a work of time and trouble. Many an afternoon did my mother and I in our rambles sit down and watch

such attempts at selection with unfailing interest. The struggles of the captured sheep to return to their scared and bewildered fellows, whose plaintive and responsive bleatings echoed loudly along the hillsides; the eager panting dogs that hemmed the captives in, or gave chase to some terrified individual that had regained its liberty, and was frantically rushing here and there, only to meet these ubiquitous tyrants at every turn it made; the guiding cries of the shepherds, the ceaseless barking of the dogs, made up a scene of much excitement and amusement to us, though mingled with pity for the poor "silly sheep," whose innocent white or black faces seemed to appeal to us for it.

But no such busy scene presented itself anywhere to us this afternoon as we walked along the hilltops towards that portion of them pertaining to Mr. Telfer's farm. It was a mild spring-like day, though we were in the heart of winter; and we were so fortunate as to find Tam sitting quietly alone on the sheltered side of his favourite knoll, with his dogs, as usual, lying at his feet.

Both my mother and I delighted greatly in the

fresh breezy air of those green hillsides, and in the sense of calm and sweet solitude which they created. Not that they possessed the actual loneliness of being far removed from the neighbourhood of men—there were farmhouses and cots in their vicinity; but so shaped and arranged were these hills as to make this impression upon the mind. Green swelling slopes, with rounded summits, appeared clustered together—a tumultuous, undulating, grassy sea—when once you had surmounted the outmost overlooking ridge, and turned your face from the more open country that you had ascended from. Not a habitation of man was then visible; nothing but a verdant hilly desert, with here and there a grey boulder embedded in the turf, looking like a solitary sentinel keeping watch over the quiet hillsides.

My mother alluded to this peculiar characteristic of the scenery; and to the feeling of peace and serenity which, she said, it always imparted to her, as she sat down on the grass over which Tam insisted on spreading his plaid for our accommodation.

"Ay, mem." said Tam, looking round about him

reverently, and then up at the blue sky, where masses of white cloud were slowly sailing, casting, when not obscuring the wintry sun, long moving shadows on the pleasant slopes; "ay, mem, it's a grand thing to be alone with the works of God I would rather follow a shepherd's life than any other trade just on account of this. We are busy enough at times, but then we have plenty of leisure between both for reading and thinking; and it's wonderful what thoughts come into my head as I sit by myself on the hillside, with no a sound to be heard around me but now and then the bleat of a sheep or the chirp of a bird. Such verses there are in the Psalms now about a shepherd's life. I often croon over the twenty-third :—

"'The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green : He leadeth me
The quiet waters by'—

just as if I was David my own self keeping my father's sheep on the hills of Bethlehem. Isna there the 'pastures green' here too, mem? Could anything be greener and more pleasant to look at

than these bonnie sloping braes, with the sunshine and the clouds streaking them time about? Did you ever see a finer day for the time of year, mem? it's as if the winter was making up for the bad summer we had. Well, and as for the 'quiet waters'—just look, mem, at that burn down there below us; it's never dry in the hottest summer, for it has its source in a deep loch lying far back among the hills, that's aye kept brimming with the hundreds of wee water-courses that trickle down the hillsides after every shower. And there it goes winding in and out among the hills; and even on the lownest summer day, when there's no enough of wind, you would think, to blow a thistle-down off, you'll no hear a murmur from it; for it just steals through the grass, and there's no a rock or a big stone in all its course hereabouts to disturb it."

"You are quite poetic, Tam," said my mother who had followed his description with her eyes, and felt the truth of it.

"Eh, mem! I never made a verse o' poetry in all my life, but I'm very fond of reading it. But they say there's a shepherd down Ettrick ways

that's written some very bonny things. Me! no, no; I have no gift that way, and you must just be laughing at me, mem, to speak o't. But what I like verses for is that they put in words what I have often thought myself, but didna ken how to express; and I suppose that's the use of poetry."

This kind of conversation lasted some time; but at last my mother changed it by remarking that we must not sit much longer in the open air at this season of the year, and that she would be glad to hear how his courtship was progressing before we returned home.

"Finely, mem, finely," said Tam, cheerfully; "the old folk have given their consent, and Susy's agreeable."

"But how did you get her to understand that you want her to be your wife?" asked my mother, with natural curiosity.

"I'll tell you, mem. You could scarcely believe what a quick creature Susy is by nature, unless you were often beside her. It was a story that her mother tell't me about her glegness that first made me think how we might get her to understand it

The Bissets have a number of Scripture prints pasted up on the walls, that they bought from a travelling packman (pedlar). One of them is meant, it says below, to represent Joseph's marriage to Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, priest of On. Joseph's got a light blue coat with gilt buttons on him, yellow breeches, and a grand ruffled sark at his bosom, besides top-boots, no unlike them that the duke wears when he comes here for the hunting. The bride is something browner than him—I suppose the Egyptian folk were darker in their colour than the Israelites; but she has braw ornaments on her head and neck and arms, and she has a red silk gown on, open in front, with a white satten petticoat below it. King Pharaoh is seated on his throne, with a gold crown on his head and a skepter in his hand, with all his counsellors round about him; and the pair are standing in front of them. Joseph is holding up the third finger—that everybody kens is the marriage finger—of the bride's left hand, and is just slipping a plain gold ring over it.

"Weel, mem, her mother, who is aye in the house with her, and kens her ways best, saw that

Susy was greatly taken up with this picture when they first got it. She was clearly trying to make out the meaning o't, but couldna succeed, till one night all at once it seemed to break on her. From looking at the picture, she came and set herself down beside her mother, and began to examine what hand her marriage-ring was on. Having made herself sure of this, she then fell to coonting the fingers, and found that her mother's ring-finger was the same as that one of Asenath's that Joseph was holding up. Then up she jumps from her stool, making her mother, who thought it best to humour her, to rise and stand in the middle of the floor. Then she would have her father get up next, which he was sweert to do after his day's work; but his wife advised him to please the poor lassie, as there was evidently something working in her mind, and she couldna bear to cross her. So up he got, and Susy made him stand in front of his wife, as it is in the picture—only the braw claes were wanting. Then she took off her mother's ring, made her father hold up the third finger of his wife's left hand, gave him the ring, and made signs to him to slip it on the finger. And when he did

it she clapped her two hands together in great glee, and then pointed to the picture, as much as to say that she had now found out all about it. Now, mem, wasna that wonderful clever for one like her?"

"Very remarkable indeed, Tam," said my mother.

"Well, the way we brought it to bear on my case was this. I had begun to come gey and often at nights; and I aye took a seat beside Susy, as Mary's lad did beside her. And I would give her a smile and a nod every now and then, with maybe a bit kindly clap on the shouther by way of variety. And she didna take it ill, and gloom at me, as I feared at first she might. Then one day that the maister sent me to the fair I bought a bonnie ribbon for her, the very colour of Asenath's gown; and she was real well pleased with it, that was she. Well, mem, one night when there was nobody there but her and the gudewife and me, the gudewife, as we had planned it between us, signed to me to rise and stand in the middle of the floor. Then she brought Susy and placed her in front of me; then she took off her wedding-ring and gave it to me; and I held up

Susy's left hand and third finger, as in the picture, and slippit it on. Then—then—well, mem, I just put my arm round her neck and gave her a good smack to show that I was claiming her for my wife," said Tam, reddening and laughing heartily; "it was all in the way of honest coortship, you know, mem," added he, apologetically.

"Certainly, Tam," said my mother, highly amused by the description.

"But the end o't was gey droll," continued Tam. "She evidently considered that she was my wife, and that the ring now belonged to her, for when her mother wanted it back she aye pointed to me and wouldna give it up. And the truth is, mem, I have been obliged to buy the wedding-ring already, although we're not to be married for some weeks yet; and, as it's broader and more shiny than her mother's, we found no difficulty in getting her to take it instead. Her mother and her have been ever at the house to see what things are wanted there; and they got the lend of a cart yesterday, and a neighbour's laddie drove it to the town, to get them. I gave the old wife, who's a grand hand at making bargains, the five-and-

twenty pounds, telling her to get the gown and shawl for Susy, and either of the two for herself, as a marriage present, with what was over. And when they came to the door at night with the things, didna the old wife hand me back two pounds of what I had given her! It'll be a nest-egg to provide for Susy if it's the Lord's will that I'm taken away first; I have put the notes back into my mother's stocking and hidden it away in the old hole. The only thing I'm vexed about, mem, is that I canna be married by my own minister. But, you see, they belong to Mr. Tait's parish, and they wouldna like to pass him by—he's a fine man too, Mr. Tait. But Susy will come with me to my own kirk when we're man and wife."

And we left Tam on his hillside, and much amused and interested we were by the information he had given us about his betrothal.

So Tam and Susy were married. Mr. Tait, as we learned from him afterwards, had so far to alter the usual ceremony as to substitute signs for words in laying the marriage vows upon the bride; but Susy, from her extraordinary acute-

ness, evidently comprehended much of their meaning. The marriage was laughed at by many, and wondered at by all except those who, like my father and mother, were acquainted with Tam's reasons for making such a choice. Tam appeared with his wife in church; and though most eyes there were bent inquisitively on them for at least the first two Sabbaths, he stood the scrutiny with composure, and as if he was not ashamed of the step he had taken. As for Susy, the people had to acknowledge that though a "dummy," she was in looks and behaviour "just like other folk."

My mother paid a visit of congratulation at Tam's cottage not long after the marriage. She made it in the evening, that she might be certain of finding him at home. Our knock was followed by the cheery sound of Tam's voice inviting whoever it was to enter. We did so, and found Tam sitting by the bright fireside in the "big chair;" for Susy had always seen her father occupy the seat of honour as head of the house, and now followed her mother's example by yielding it up to her "gudeman." Tam gave us a most beaming welcome, and the chair was vacated for my mother's

accommodation. It was a pleasant home picture we had intruded upon. The dogs lay on the white hearth-stone like privileged inmates, and the cat was in Susy's lap. She was seated opposite to her husband's chair on a stool—Tam's seat in childhood—which seemed her favourite position, and knitting diligently as he had described to us. She was neatly and becomingly dressed in the national "short gown"—a dress much more picturesque than the "wrapper" of present times—a full woollen petticoat striped black and red, and a blue and white check apron, whose strings gathered the short gown tidily in to her waist. She had not the dull, heavy look which those who suffer from her deprivation often have, and her quick observant eyes seemed in great measure to supply the lack of her absent senses.

Tam seemed delighted to show his wife and his altered house to my mother. It was altered truly. The new articles of furniture, of course, did something towards the change; but it was the order and cleanliness that now reigned instead of the former dirt and confusion that were the principal cause of it, and which pleased my mother; and

she could not but think that Tam had been guided wisely though strangely in his choice of a wife.

He pointed out to us with simple pride the various articles of Susy's own "providing." These were a tea-tray, gorgeous with a bunch of red and white roses in the centre, and two small trays to match; a tea-service of coarse but showy china, which was brought out from a corner "aumrie" for my mother's inspection; but, above all, a neat small chest of drawers of mahogany—second-hand, it is true, but in excellent preservation. A clean white napkin was spread on its top, and on it stood a jug filled with sprigs of dark green holly with their scarlet berries, a tree of which grew in a corner of the kailyard, but by whom planted no one could tell. Above the chest of drawers, and suspended by a nail to the now whitewashed walls, was a small square mirror in a mahogany frame, with several peacocks' feathers stuck above it for ornament. While Tam was thus occupied Susy stood quietly looking on with eyes that noted everything, and plainly expressed pleasure at my mother's inspection.

"It's all paid for, mem, with her stocking-

money," said Tam, exultingly; "she's kent to be so grand a worker of stockings that she'll often get an order for a dozen pairs at once from a shop in the town. It's the same shop where her mother got the shawls and gown, and they made them cheaper on account of the stockings. And they pay Susy for her work fairly—very fairly. You have seen her in the gown and shawl at the kirk, mem, so we needna show you them."

My mother had seen them at church, and thought them most suitable and of good material.

Susy had also been dealing with the packman, for on the walls were various cheap Scripture prints of that period, in flaming reds and yellows, with here and there a dash of green and blue to heighten the effect; and I observed that the most conspicuous one, both in colouring and in the place allotted to it, was a duplicate of Joseph's marriage to Asenath. Absurd though these prints were in design and colour, they brightened the cottage walls, and were evidently considered extraordinary works of art by their owners.

"Doesna she keep a clean höuse, mem?" said Tam, clapping his wife approvingly on the shoulder;

"she kens the way to do't, though I didna; and it's just as clean in the darkest corner as in the lightest. She'll no allow peats to be under the bedsteads, on account of the dirt they make; so I have had to contrive a kind of shed for them with some old wood that the maister let me take from the farmyard, and I have theekit it with heather to keep out the wet. And there's no gathering of sticks and other things under the bed now! I think," added Tam, laughing, "that my poor old mother would say I was ower well off, if she could see how comfortable Susy makes me. The patch-work covers on the beds, mem—arena they very bonnie?—were made by Susy when she was just a lassie. Mem! she's that active. She brought a brush and whitening with her from her mother's; and the very morning after we were married didna she make me help her to lift all the heavy things out to the front of the house; and when I came home at night there were the walls and the roof cleaned in every corner, and her waiting for me to help her to carry the things back again. There's nothing like a wife for comfort. You were very right, mem, in counselling me to get married; and

dinna you think I have just fallen on my feet for a wife?"

"I think you have, Tam," responded my mother, as she heartily shook hands with the pair, and smiled kindly to Susy.

About a year after this period—of course we had seen Tam often on the hillside, and also in his cottage, during the interval—we heard that an infant daughter was born to him.

"And they say that Lang Tam's just extraordinarily proud o' the bairn," said Jess Gillespie, who was our informant, and who could never see anything in Tam but his simplicity.

Another congratulatory visit, of course, had tc be paid by my mother, to Tam's cottage. She delayed it, however, till she heard that Susy's mother, who had nursed her daughter during her confinement, had returned to her own home.

We found the pair seated exactly as on our first visit to them—Tam in the arm-chair, and Susy on her stool with the never-failing knitting in her hands—but between them now was an infant's cradle, the low old-fashioned cradle which was rocked by the foot, and in which Susy herself

had lain when a baby. Tam was a very proud father, as Jess Gillespie had said. It was most amusing to see him stoop over the cradle, and lift out the child in his great brown hands to exhibit it. It protested most vigorously at having its sleep broken for our gratification.

"Hear to it, mem—just hear to it!" cried Tam, looking down admiringly on the baby, which my mother had relinquished to Susy after "feeling its weight" according to custom; "she's no dummy, at any rate; and she's no deaf, for when I was so stupid one day as to knock down a heavy dish from the table that made an awful rattle on the hearth-stane, she gave such a start. It was while the grannie was with us, and a good scolding she gave me for so frightening the wean."

"But, Tam," said my mother, with a smile, "what about the peace and quietness here that you compared to heaven? I am afraid that must be gone now."

Tam scratched his head and laughed. "Hoots, mem!" said he, "I wasna married then. And who could say that the bit greet o' a bairn was a disturbance! Since ever the grannie tell't me that

greeting was strengthening to its lungs, poor wee wifie, I think it's just like music. And when I said that to you, mem, I had clean forgot that there must be thousands and thousands of such wee bairns in heaven, although they mayna greet there."

That year my father died. We had to leave our pleasant manse and kindly people, 'most of whom my mother parted with never to meet them again on earth. But amongst the many who regretted our departure, there was no one who grieved more deeply, or whom we more sorrowed to part from, than Lang Tam Tamson.

AUNTIE KIRSTY'S VISIT TO GLASGOW.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRONGATE.

I AM an old bachelor, and have no near relations in this world. My housekeeper Nelly (Mrs. Pender the neighbours and those we deal with call her, but to me she is only Nelly) is my oldest friend with one exception, and indeed more friend than servant.

"Mr. Matthew," said Nelly one evening—for she always keeps me company then if no friend has dropped in—"Mr. Matthew, I often wonder that we are such slaves to habit. If we werena, what should hinder you and me from going cannily back to the old place and ending our days there? I often find myself yirning after it when the days turn long and warm, and the setting sun glints bonnily on the craigs and Arthur's Seat; and then

I marvel at our folly in living on in a close stoury (dusty) town, when we might have green grass and trees, and maybe a bit running burn before our door; and a bonnie garden with flowers and grozzet (gooseberry) bushes, and a bleaching-green of our own.

"Still, Mr. Matthew, when the days begin to draw in, and get wet and cold, I canna say but I'm thankful to be so near kirk and market. I'm no so strong and supple as I have been, and there's a great difference between stepping down to the flesher's at the corner for our bit pound o' steak or minced collops, to sending two or maybe three miles for it in the country; and the meat often as teugh (tough) as bend leather when you get it.

"And then the country kirks, that are a pleasure to sit in in summer, when you can see the green kirkyard and the waving trees and the blue sky through the windows and the open door, are awfully cold and comfortless in winter—it's like sitting in a damp cellar to be in them, and every other body has a hoast (cough). It's a great comfort to have a kirk near one, there's no doubt; and they're very

particular in heating the stoves in ours; and that's why I never grudge to give the bederal a half-crown at the new year, while most put him off with a shilling.

"But I have kent some, Mr. Matthew, who, rather than bide in a town with all its comforts, would have preferred to live in the poorest bigging in all the country. There was my Auntie Kirsty—far from thinking a town either a cheerful or a comfortable place, she held to her dying day it was neither, and that the most of the folk there were just thieves and vagabonds. But then she was only once in a town in her life, and she got a fright at that time besides."

"How was that, Nelly?" said I.

"I dinna think, Mr. Matthew," said Nelly, settling herself more comfortably in her chair, and sticking her knitting-needles carefully into the feather sheaf at her waist, as she always does before telling a story—"I dinna think that you ever heard me speak of my Auntie Kirsty before. I am sure, at least, that you never saw her, for at the time we lived in the manse she was an eldern woman, stopping at a farmhouse in Boulder parish.

She wasna my full aunt, for my grandfather was twice married, and she and my Auntie Peggy were by the first wife, while my father was by the second. When my grandfather died, and my Auntie Peggy got married to the tailor, she went among her mother's friends at the East Braeside Farm, where she kept her cousin John Lundie's house till her death; and a good manager she was, and very kind to his motherless bairns. Many folk wondered that she and John didna make a match o't; but she was some years older than he was; besides, they had kent one another all their days, and I have often noticed that folk seldom think of marrying when that is the case.

"I dinna believe that marriage—at least, as regarded hersell—ever entered into my Auntie Kirsty's head. For one thing, she had no time to think o't, and I canna but suspect that idleset is at the bottom of many matches. If folk had their hands full of work there would be fewer thoughtless marriages.

"My Auntie Kirsty," continued Nelly, "was aye the worker in her father's family, and when she came to John's, truly she had her hands full.

There were four wee motherless bairns to look after, two young light-headed hizzies to keep to their work, and most of the care of a large dairy farm on her shoulders; for John, honest man, aye took things easy. There was no wonder she didna get married.

"It wasna from ill-looks, however. She was a big, well-favoured, bouncing woman, I mind, with an arm like a man's for strength. I have seen her lift weights that many a man couldna stir. To see her going about her work with her coats weel kiltit to keep them clean, was just to see the picture of a throughgaun (practical), clever woman; and everybody said that John had just fallen on his feet for a housekeeper. But though my Auntie Kirsty was all this, she was also very simple and tender-hearted, and just as ignorant as a bairn about the ways of the world; and no wonder, for she had never been out o' the country side she was born in. She had never seen Yoker even, though it was only ten miles from John's; but the truth was, she couldna be easily spared from home, and, 'deed, she cared little about it.

"But at last, one summer, about six years after

she had gone to Braeside, when all the cows had calved, and the thrang (pressure) of work was by till the harvest came, it came into my Auntie Kirsty's head that she would like to go to Glasgow and see her sister Peggy and her family. Peggy and her man had settled in Glasgow soon after their marriage; for Rabby was a pushing chield, and had heard of a good opening there in his trade; and, 'deed, he got on wonderfully. Peggy had been through once to see her friends, but it was years since; and every time she wrote to them, which was about twice a year, she was very fain that her sister or some o' them should come and pay her a visit.

"My Auntie Kirsty couldna be at the trouble of writing to say she was coming—for, well-a-wat! she could handle a milk-bowie (milk-pail) muckle better than a pen—but she got Rabby's direction by heart; and though Glasgow, she heard, was a place just extraordinary for bigness, she thought, having a Scotch tongue in her head, that there would be no difficulty in finding the way to the house she wanted.

"Well, my Auntie Kirsty got a far-away cousin

of her own to fill her place at the farm till she came back, which she meant to do in three weeks; and very early on a fine summer morning she started—no empty handed, you may be sure—for Glasgow. She had a bundle with a change and her Sabbath-day's gown and shawl in it, for she didna travel in her best, besides a basket with some fresh eggs and butter and two pair o' ducks that she was taking as a treat like to her town friends. She would have nothing to do with a coach, though one ran through Yoker to Glasgow; she had never been in one in her life, and she thought she was safer trusting to her own legs John sent a cart with her for the first twelve miles, and after that she had to walk as many more to reach the house of an old acquaintance who, she knew, would be glad to see her, and with whom she meant to bide a night.

"She had no trouble in finding her out, for the house stood by the roadside on the outskirts of a small town that she had to pass through; and well pleased was her friend to see her, for they hadna met since my auntie had gone to John's. Of course they had many old stories to crack about,

and new ones too, for her friend had got married since she had seen her; and if my Auntie Kirsty hadna a man and weans o' her own to make cares for her to talk about like the other, she had toil enough with John and his, if she had been of a compleening turn o' mind, which she wasna.

"Her friend prigged (entreated) sore that she would stay longer with her; but my Auntie Kirsty would only consent to stay another night on the home-going; she was fain to see her sister, and she was off and on her road again by break o' day. She took the walking very cannily, for she wasna used to travelling, and she had the whole day before her; besides, her feet were something sore with her yesterday's tramp. She bathed them now and then in the roadside burns to cool them; for my Auntie Kirsty was too careful a woman to think of walking in shoes and stockings. She had clean thread stockings and well blackened shoes in her bundle, and she didna put them on till she was near to Glasgow.

"My Auntie Kirsty thought the country she passed through was very bonnie of its kind; but she was rather wearied of the constant sight of the

dusty hedges that bordered the road; and though the corn land and the tattie (potato) rigs were very fine, she couldna help missing the quiet green braes and grassy holms of her own place. She didna call at any public on the road to refresh herself; for she wasna used to such places, and, 'deed, would have thought shame, being a single woman, to be seen in them eating and drinking; for my Auntie Kirsty had a decent pride in her good name. She had a piece bread and cheese in her pouch, which her friend had given her, and she sat down and took her twal-hours (noon meal) at a quiet bit of the road where a saugh (willow) tree or two hung over a burn. 'Rest and be thankfu',' she called the place, for she was beginning to feel tired, and would have been glad to be at her journey's end.

"It was wearing on now in the afternoon, and she thought she was very long of coming to the town. Every bit cluster of houses she saw before her she took for Glasgow, and she had many a disappointment when she came up to them, and found they were just two rows—sometimes only one—of low cot-houses, with a storied one here

and there among them, like the Kirkton of Boulder. She aye asked at these small towns how far she was from Glasgow, for she was so little accustomed to milestones—the Braeside farm being gey far off the highroad—that she never thought of looking at them. She got civil answers to her questions, though the folk didna scruple to ask her where she came from, and who she was going to see in Glasgow; and my auntie had no objections to satisfy them, for she thought she had no cause to be ashamed of her folk, and she was aye of a free and furthy (frank) nature.

"At length she came to a bigger town than any she had seen yet, and this she had no doubt was Glasgow. But it was only Ru'glen, a woman told her—that all west country folk ken lies a wee bit out of the city; so my auntie, with many a weary groan, went her ways down a street so 'syde-and-wyde' that there was elbow-room for every one in Boulder in it. Her feet had now as many blisters on them as there were shillings in her purse; and she went hirpling slowly down a long loan (lane), asking her road every five minutes. But soon there was little needcessity for this; she saw she

must be drawing near to the town, for the houses and travellers were growing thicker on the road, and the air was getting very close with reek (smoke)—so close that my Auntie Kirsty feared that some great fire, like what they had sometimes heard o' at the farm, had broken out in the town and was devouring all before it. I wonder, Mr. Matthew, what she would have thought of the black smoke that the Glasgow lums (chimneys) vomit at the present day, when she was so struck by it seventy years back.

"My Auntie Kirsty was uneasy in her mind, and she made as muckle haste as she could in the state her feet were in, for fear the fire might be in the neighbourhood of Peggy's house; but she was soon relieved by discovering that the reek, which was as thick as if it came from a lime-kiln, was pouring out from some long brick lums that rose high in the air above the houses, and she minded now what she had heard about the mills of Glasgow. She saw a woman standing at a door-cheek dancing a bairn in her arms, and she stopped and asked her if this was the Briggate o' Glasgow, or if she was near it.

"'The Briggate o' Glasgow!' quo the wife. 'Wow's me! woman, ye've to cross the water before ye can get to the Briggate, and ye're just at the Gorbals the noo.'

"My auntie's heart sank within her; but on she hirpled, and at last she got through the Gorbals. She crossed a muckle brig (bridge) over the Clyde, and then turned down by the side of the river, as she had been directed; for now that she had got to the town she was so dumbfoundert with the strange sights and sounds about her that she was under the needcessity of asking her way every other minute. But the names of the streets went out o' her head as fast as she heard them, and the farther she got the more helpless and distressed she grew. Such a sight of slated houses she had never seen before, nor even dreamt o', and she soon began to fear that she would lose herself among them and never get to Peggy's. She had expected to find Glasgow only five or six times bigger than the Kirkton o' Boulder; but the houses she had seen already would have made more than twenty Kirktons, and she hadna come to the end o' them yet. If she was lost, seeking for her would be like

seeking for a needle in a bundle of hay; and though she was so strong and stout a woman, she couldna think of this without her spirits sinking within her.

"Then all the stories she had ever heard—and many a one had reached Boulder parish—of the tricks and wickednesses that were practeezed in big towns, came rushing into her memory. Strangers had disappeared there, and never been heard of again, she had been told; and doctors kept resurrectionists in their pay, who were as ready to lay their murdering hands on the living as to lift the dead. She was a lone woman, and who kent but that they had their eye on her already! And as these thoughts passed through her mind, she began to cast timorsome looks about her, and more than one waff-looking (disreputable) character she set down as a body-snatcher.

"Such fears forced themselves into my Auntie Kirsty's mind whether she would or no—for you see she was altogether landward bred, and in these days there was little communication between the outlying districts and the great towns, and the packmen were almost the only news-carriers. She

really didna ken whether it was better to go on or to turn back. She was in an awful swither (doubt); and the very sweat, she said, ran down her face with her fears and perplexities. But she was loth to give up the chance of seeing Peggy and the bairns after coming so far for that purpose; besides, she had now got so deep into the town that it was just as difficult for her to do the one as the other, no to mention her weariness. So on she creepit, keeping a wary look about her, thinking she must surely soon leave the throng of the town behind her, and that she would find the Briggate—if ever she got there—a quiet place; for Peggy, she was morally persuaded, could never live in such a stir as was now about her.

"But the farther she went, the worse the din got, and the streets the closer; and she wandered on like a demented body, the folk pushing by her so fast, and knocking against her with so little ceremony—no doubt, being a bouncing woman with a bundle on one arm and a basket on the other, she took more than her right share of the pavement—that she scarcely kent whether her head or her feet were uppermost.

"'Surely,' thought my Auntie Kirsty—'surely something by-ordinary maun have happened in the town to put a' thae folk in such a hurry. I wish with a' my heart I was out o't, or that I had dropped a line to Rabby to meet me.'

"At length she found herself in a grander and more crowded place than she had yet seen, which, I think, from her description, must have been the Trongate—you ken I was once in Glasgow with your mother, Mr. Matthew—for she stood glowering for a while, she said, in perfect astonishment at the effigy of a black man and horse—King William's statute it's like—that stood on a height of masonwork in front of a grand-looking building. The building had many queer faces carved on the outside o't above some muckle arches, beneath which well-drest gentlemen were walking up and down.

"'Well, the like o' that now!' said my Auntie Kirsty to herself—I just tell you the story as she used to tell it herself, Mr. Matthew—'I wonder what that man and horse are made o', and what garr'd (caused) folk stick them up so far above men's heads. It minds me,' thought my Auntie

Kirsty, 'o' the image that Nebuchadnezzar, king o' Babylon, set up for the people to worship, but I trow there's nae goold about this ane.'

"And after taking a long look at the 'thing,' she minded herself, and walked on.

"But now the grandeur of the shops in the Trongate began to distract my Auntie Kirsty's thoughts, and though she was in such peril and uncertainty, she couldna help looking into every one she passed, wondering where all the bonnie things she saw came from, and thinking that surely all the riches of the world were displayed there at once. And there was one especially, with gold and silver things in't, that dazzled her very een to look at, it was so glittering with rings and chains and bonnie dies, no to mention trays, and candlesticks, and teapots of real silver.

"And then some of the folk she met in this street were just as extraordinary as the shops, so extraordinary that my Auntie Kirsty couldna keep from turning round to look after them. It wasna just the leddies, though they were every one as fine as peacocks; but she saw two or three of the college lads with their red gowns hanging

about them, and my Auntie Kirsty, who had never seen such a thing on a man's back before, or heard tell o't, thought naturally enough, honest woman, that they were on the spree, and had borrowed their mother's duffle cloaks to go a guisarding in, though it was scarcely the right time of year for that nonsense.

"'They'll no do muckle harm to them, though,' thought my Auntie Kirsty, giving the lads as wide a berth as the pavement would let her, 'for 'deed they're a' greatly in need o' a scouring.'

"But it didna do to be trifling her time in this way, and she in such perilous circumstances, so she began again to ask for the Briggate at the most sponsible (respectable-looking) folk of her own station that she saw. But she couldna clearly understand their directions; they were all in such a hurry, too, that she felt blate to question them. They told her to go up such an entry and through such a street, pointing with their fingers, and warning her when she was to turn to the right and when to the left; but they might as well have spoken to the wind, for their words just went in at one ear and out at the other. It wasna from weakness of

judgment, Mr. Matthew; no, no, it was only because everything was so new and surprising to her. If they had been speaking of kye (cows) or country work she would have been sharp enough.

"She was just falling into a despairing state when up comes a decently put-on, tradesman-like man, who, after taking a good look at her, asked what was wrong with her.

"'I'm on my way to my gudebrither's (brother-in-law's) house in the Briggate here,' says my Auntie Kirsty, glad to tell her story; 'I never was in the town before, and, 'deed, I think the place maun be bewitched, for the farther I gang, the farther the Briggate flees frae me.'

"'What's your gudebrother's name?' says the man.

"'Robert McCorkindale, the tailor,' says she.

"But the words had scarcely left her lips than the man out with a loud guffaw (laugh), and said that he kent her gudebrother weel; which didna seem extraordinary to my Auntie Kirsty, for Rabby had been well respected in his native place, and doubtless would be well kent in Glasgow; and it struck her that to have fallen in with this man in

the time of her distress was surely a special interposition of Providence. So the man said that for Rabby's sake, and as she was a stranger, and might fall into bad company if she was left to find the road to the Briggate by herself, 'the town being fu' o' such,' he said—weel-a-wat! he spoke the truth there—he would see her safe into her gude-brother's house, though it took him out of his own road.

"Well, my Auntie Kirsty thought it very kind of the man, more by token as he would carry her bundle and basket, though she felt shame to let him; but he wouldna be hindered. And truly she found it a great easement, for she had come twenty miles that day with them, and they were gey and heavy, especially the basket. So off they set together, he before and she close behind, and as she followed him she made up her mind that when they came to the end of the journey she would e'en give him a pair of the ducks to himself as a compliment for his civeelity.

"My Auntie was a very ceevil person herself, and didna think it was good manners to walk in company with anybody, especially a man so neigh-

bourly and obleeging, without speaking to him, so she began with asking him how long it was since he had seen Rabby.

"'Weel, I should say it's about three weeks,' says the man, 'when I called to pay for this stand of claes that I had gotten from him.'

"My Auntie looked approvingly at the claes, which were good corduroys, and for 'ilkaday' ones she thought they did Rabby credit.

"'And was Peggy and all the bairns weel then?' says she.

"'Extraordinary weel,' says he.

"'And can you tell me,' says my Auntie, feeling the more friendly the longer she spoke, 'what kind o' like bairn wee Kirsty, my ain namedochter, is?'

"'I would say,' says the man, with a queer winkle of his eye, as she minded afterwards,' 'that she's no unlike yoursell, only she's gotten such an ugly hare-lip.'

"'Eh, sirs!' cries my Auntie, dumbfoundert with this news, and forgetting she was on the street, 'they never said a word about it in the letter.'

"'You see, they wouldna like to distress you, says the man.

"'That maun have been it,' says my Auntie. But just at that moment they came to the entrance of a close; my auntie couldna tell what part of the town it was in.

"'Wait a minute here,' says the man, 'I have a message to give to a woman in here,' says he; 'but I'll be back directly—I'll not set down the things for a' the time.'

"So away went he through the close mouth, that was as dark as a Yule (Christmas) morning, and smelled as ill as any middenstead (dungh..ll) in all the country, and my auntie's bundle and basket went with him.

"Well, my Auntie stood, and better stood, wondering at last, poor simple woman! what had become of the man. She was sore worn out with her two days' travelling along the hard road, and vexed with the news about wee Kirsty, and would have given the world, if she had had it, to have been at Peggy's fireside with a cup of tea before her. Once or twice people came out of the close as she was waiting there, and both them and everybody that went by glowered at her till she began to feel shamefaced and bamboozled (em-

barrassed) like. She would gladly have taken herself away, but she behoved to wait for the man, and, weel-a-wat! he didna seem in any hurry.

"At last, when she had waited a most unconscionable time, and after a whole crowd of dirty, 'ne'er-do-weel' bairns had gathered round her, tormenting her with pulling at her gown and then running away, and with other tricks that ill-brought-up bairns are guilty of, a decent poor woman, carrying a basket with caps and staylaces and such like things to sell, came out of the close.

"'You didna see a man in there,' says my poor Auntie Kirsty to her, 'with a basket, and a bundle tied up in a blue spotted napkin in his haunds, did you?'

"'No,' says the woman, 'I canna say I noticed him.'

"'He was a long, thin, black-a-vised man,' says my Auntie; 'rather pock-marked (marked with smallpox), and with a cast in his ee (squint).'

"'I am sure I didna see him,' says the woman; 'but he had maybe gone out at the other end o' the close before I came through it.'

"My Auntie Kirsty thought it very queer, but

she said nothing more to the woman. She would have gone up the close in search of the man, but it was a very dark and disrespectable-like place, and she considered how easy, being her lone and a stranger, it would be to pull her into some house there, rob and maybe murder her, and afterwards make pies and sassage meat of her body, as she had read about in the packmen's story books.

"The basket woman saw that there was something the matter with her, and says she, 'Is there anything wrang with you, mistress,' says she, 'that you're standing here?'

"'Naething,' says my Auntie Kirsty; 'but he's keepit me waiting a haill half-hour for him, and he promised only to bide a minute. I wish I saw my things again,' says my Auntie Kirsty.

"'Of course you ken the man?' says the woman.

"'No me,' says my Auntie Kirsty. 'I'm a stranger in the town, and weel-a-wat! I wish I had never seen it—it's just a judgment kind o' place, I think,' says my Auntie, wiping the sweat off her face with the corner of her shawl.

"'But d'ye mean to say, mistress,' began the woman.

"'I'm no mair mistress than you're mem,' says my Auntie, sharply, for her temper was beginning to give way under her troubles; 'Gude be thankit! I was never sae far left to mysell as to get married.'

"'Some folk might say that you're thankful for sma mercies,' says the woman, with a laugh; 'but I winna, for I have had my ain share o' the troubles o' married life, with a drunken man and five bairns to work for. But surely you were never such a fule as to give the man your things awa with him without kenning who he was?'

"'He tell'd me he kent my gudebrither, and he offered to take me to the Briggate and to carry my things for me,' says my Auntie.

"'This is no the way to the Briggate,' says the woman. 'It's quite clear,' says the woman, 'that the man has cheated you, and that you'll never see your things again. He's slippit through at the other end of the close while you've been waiting here, and he'll be far enough awa by this time, sae there's na use in your biding here ony langer,' says she.

"'Oh, the black-hearted vagäbond!' cries my poor Auntie Kirsty, 'to gang and take advantage

of a puir stranger; and of a' things to steal my gude Sabbath day's gown and shawl that I havena had six times on my back yet, for I only bought them the last winter;' and though a stout-hearted woman, she fairly fell to the greeting (crying).

"'But what made ye trust a body ye never saw before?' says the woman of the town to the woman of the country; 'ye couldna tell whether he mightna cheat ye.'

"'Wha was ever to suspect him?' says my Auntie; 'he was baith well-spoken and well put on; the very claes he had on were made by Rabby, he said; and he tell'd me too that my wee namedochter had gotten a harshie lip—but he's maybe a leear as weel as a thief. They wouldna believe it at Braeside if I was to tell them. Wha could ever think that Glasgow was such a wicked place!'

"'There's bad and gude in a' places as weel as Glasgow,' says the woman. 'But let this be a lesson to you, my woman—since I mauna call you mistress—never to trust folk till you ken something about them. The next time you didna ken your road, ask ane o' the caddies (porters) at the

street corners to show you't; but Glasgow's no ill to find out, and you'll no lang need help to do't.'

"'Maybe sae,' says my Auntie; 'but I wouldna bide twa nights here to be made queen o' Sheba. But you seem a decent woman—at least you have a' the appearance o't,' says my Auntie, taking a good look at her; 'and if you'll guide me to my gudebrither's, I'll make it worth your while. I suppose there's nae chance of that smooth-tongued vagabond coming back?'—taking another look at the close.

"'Ye may take my word for that,' says the woman; "and as to guiding ye to the Briggate, I'm agreeable. I'll do't for a sixpence, for I canna afford to lose my time, and ye dinna need to pay me till I've taken ye to your freends.'

"So off they set to the Briggate; and when my Auntie saw Rabby's sign above the shop door, she knew all was right, and she gave the woman her sixpence.

Rabby and Peggy were just extraordinary astonished and pleased to see her; but they were very sorry when they learnt what had befallen her, and also for the loss of the ducks and the other things

Rabby said, 'Set up the fellow's impudence,' on hearing that he had passed himself off as a customer of his; and as for Peggy, she couldna get over 'the blackguard's dauring to misca a bairn o' hers—wi' his harshie lip.' And she lifted wee Kirsty out of her cradle, and brought her to her sister to show 'what a lee it was.' Rabby wanted to go to the police-office to give information about the robbery; but when my Auntie Kirsty understood that if the thief was discovered she would have to appear before a magistrate to identify him, she would have nothing to do with it.

"'I'll rather lose every gown I hae,' she said, 'than hae it kent in Boulder that I have been inside a police-office. And as for the other things,' said she, 'there's plenty mair where they came frae, and you can either send to Braeside for them, Peggy, or come for them yoursell with the bairns—a breath o' caller air would do ye a' muckle good after living sae lang in this ill-smelling town.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE WRONG COACH.

"WELL, my Auntie Kirsty had taken such a scunner (loathing) to Glasgow, and no wonder, that she couldna be in peace till she was safe out o't; and away home she would be in the morning. There was no use arguing with her, when once my Auntie Kirsty had made up her mind; she wasna to be moved, as all her friends were aware of. Peggy and Rabby did all they could to tempt her to stay, by telling her of the grand sights and fine things they would take her to see.

"'There's the high kirk, Kirsty, and the college, and the green, and the Broomielaw wi' a' the boats,' cried Peggy. 'Eh, Kirsty, woman, you would never gang awa without seeing them.'

"'Haud your tongue, Peggy Pender,' was all that my poor Auntie Kirsty could say, 'for I tell you I canna bide.'

"'And the shops and the braw folk, woman!'

"'I have seen enough o' your shops and braw folk, and ower muckle o' some o' them,' quo my Auntie.

"'Eh! but the ministers, Kirsty; you would never gang back to Boulder without hearing some o' our grand ministers. What would the folk there think o' you if they were to learn that you had been in Glasgow, and yet had neither heard Dr. Balfour, nor our ain minister Dr. Love o' Anderston, wha many think is the most powerfu' preacher o' the twa?'

"'Powerfu' here, or powerfu' there,' said my Auntie Kirsty, 'our ain auld minister at the Kirkton, honest man, maun just serve my turn.'

"'Dear me, Kirsty, I aye thought till now that you had been a woman o' speerit,' said Rabby.

"'Speerit or no speerit, Rabby McCorkindale,' said my Auntie, 'I maun be awa' hame the morn. And I tell ye, Rabby, you and Peggy and the bairns living here just puts me in mind o' Lot and his family abiding in Sodom, where they had nae business to be; ye shouldna forget that "evil communications corrupt good manners."'

"'Hoots, Kirsty! Glasgow's a godly place,' said Peggy.

"'Do your godly folk gang about the street telling lees to strangers and breaking the eighth commandment?' said my Auntie.

"'Ye mauna judge a' the folk by one scoondrel,' said Rabby, with a look of great wisdom.

"'The scum aye tells what's in the pat,' says my Auntie.

"And so they had just to give in to her, and all they could succeed in was to get her to take the mail coach. It ran twice a week, and one of the days was the next. To please her, Rabby went to the coach office and secured her seat. And next morning, after taking farewell of Peggy and the bairns, away went my Auntie Kirsty with him to the coach.

"'Na, na,' said she to Peggy, who even at the last tried to get her to change her mind; 'na, na, lass, I have seen enough o' towns; and if my freends want to see me they maun just come out to the farm.'

"She kept a firm grip of Rabby's coat-sleeve, though she was half a head taller than him and

stout in proportion, as they went along the streets; and she looked in every direction for the vagabond that had imposed on her, but she could see nothing of him. She had nothing now to steal but her purse, and she had secured it by putting a corking pin into the mouth of her pocket. Rabby had thought they were before the time, but when they came in sight of the coach office—'Preserve us a', Kirsty! if there isna the coach just about to start!' he cried, and he had to pull her on as fast as he could, and to lose no time in helping her up to the top, which her strangeness to coach travelling and her dread at climbing up such a height, made no easy job. But at last, what with Rabby pushing her up from below and the folk that were already seated pulling her from above, she did get up; and then she looked fearfully down at Rabby, and took a mournful farewell of him, thinking it more than likely that they might never meet again in this world, for the coach seemed to her a very shoogly (shaky) concern, and she had a strong presentiment in her mind that it would coup (overturn) on the road. But just at that moment the coachman, who was already seated, gave a chirrup to the

horses, and as the coach began to move she had enough ado gripping by the rail to steady herself, for she was at the far end of one of the back seats, to think more of Rabby, who stood on the causeway with his hands in his trouser pockets, watching the coach till it had turned a corner; and then another coming rumbling along the street he got out of its way and walked quietly back to his shop.

"It was an awful journey that to my Auntie Kirsty. There were two stout folk on the seat besides herself, and she had so little room that she feared she would lose her balance and fall over the side. The bit railing was her only security, and she held on to it like grim death; she dared na let go her hold even for an instant, for the height made her head dizzy; besides, the coach sometimes swung from one side to the other, and when a wheel went over a stone her very heart louped (leaped) within her. It was worst on the town causeway, but even the country roads were bad enough. She was at the back of the coach, as I have said, and the stour (dust) that rose by the horses' feet hung around her and her neighbours, blinded their een, and nearly choked them. As

for seeing anything of the country they were driving through, it was an impossibility; she got now and then glints o' trees and houses by the roadside, that was all; but even if there had been no stour, her terrors were so great that look around her she couldna. Tender as her feet were, she would rather have been on them. The folk beside her seemed sociable enough, and cracked away to one another, but she was so full of her tribulations and the loss of her good claes, that she could neither listen nor speak to them. Every mile though was bringing her nearer home, and that thought brought consolation with it.

"About mid-day the coach stopped for half an hour at an inn to let the passengers get their dinner, and all that were on the top got down except my Auntie Kirsty. She hadna Rabby now to help her up again, and she thought it more prudent to stay where she was, though it might make her look kenspeckle (conspicuous). She had a paper bag full of cookies that Peggy had given her, so she didna want for meat; and a man very ceevily handed her up a drink of water on her asking for it. She was able to look about her now, and it struck her that the

place was strange to her; she had no recollection of seeing the inn the day before—she could scarcely have overlooked it then, so she asked her fellow-travellers when they came back if this could be the right road, for she was sure she had not passed this place on her way to Glasgow.

"'You must have come by the other road, then,' said one of them; 'this is the Midcalder ane, but it'll be a' the same in the end.'

"And my Auntie Kirsty's mind was set at rest, for there might have been three roads to Yoker for all she knew to the contrary; and the coachman coming round by her side of the coach to mount to his seat, she cried to him to be sure to set her down at 'the town,' for that was the name Yoker went by among the Boulder folk. She had ten miles, she knew, to walk after that; but she wearied to be off that great trundling coach and on her own legs again; and what were ten miles when she was going home with no burden to carry? The coachman said gruffly, 'Ay, ay, mistress,' in answer, so she thought he wouldna forget her, and in another minute the coach was off again.

"My Auntie Kirsty thought that journey was

never to come to an end. Her bones were almost shaken to pieces, her heart was in her mouth, and her head felt like to split with the rattling of the coach, the heat of the sun, and her distress of mind. Besides, she was sore troubled as the day wore on about how she was to find her way to the ground with her legs so stiff and cramped, without the help of Rabby McCorkindale.

"'I dinna think I could straighten myself if I tried,' thought my Auntie Kirsty, moving herself as far yont (over) as the seat would let her to prove it; 'and how ever are they to get me down from the tap o' the coach? I'm no babby, I trow, for them to lift.'

"A good solid 'babby' they would have found her, honest woman.

"They had been upwards of eight hours on the road—my auntie would have sworn to a whole day—when they began to enter into a town, which she had no doubt was Yoker at last; for once or twice during the last hour she had got a glint through the stour of some hills that she supposed were the ones they saw from Boulder, and her heart had warmed to them as signs of home.

'Catch me ever losing sight o' them again!' she said to herself; 'this travelling doesna agree with me at a'.' She had had no idea that Yoker was so big a town as this; it wasna unlike Glasgow itself for that matter. On they rumbled between high dark houses, and finally turned into a very wide, spacious street, up which they went so cannily that my auntie could use her een with perfect freedom.

"'Dear me!' quo my Auntie Kirsty to her nearest neighbour, as her een suddenly fell on some object that struck her as extraordinary; 'whatna muckle rock's that with the house on the tap o't—it canna be a kirk, surely?'

"'A kirk, wóman!' says the other. 'D'ye no ken the Castle o' Edinburgh when ye see it?'

"'The Castle o' Edinburgh!' says my Auntie Kirsty in a faint voice, and with her head running round. 'What do you mean, woman?'

"'What do I mean!' says the woman, glowering at her in surprise. 'I mean just what I say—that it's the Castle o' Edinburgh. What else should it be?'

"But just then the coach drew up at the door of

the White Hart Inn, and the woman, with the rest of the passengers, got down without delay, leaving my Auntie Kirsty sitting like an image on the top. She was like a person in a dream, perfectly helpless and stupified; and though she saw every other person had left the coach, she made no attempt to follow them. But she was soon roused out of this state.

"'Come awa, mistress,' cried the coachman, coming round to where she sat; 'what for are ye sitting there?'

"'Whatna town's this, sir, if you please?' says my Auntie in a trembling voice, but trying to speak very ceevil.

"'Town! what town should it be but Edinburgh?'

"'It's no possible!' says my Auntie. 'Are you sure that it's Edinburgh?'

"'Sure enough,' says the man.

"'Then pity on me!' says my poor Auntie Kirsty, thinking there must be glamour in the matter, and giving herself up for lost.

"'Well, come down, then,' says the man, roughly; ye're no to sit here a' night.'

"But my Auntie wouldna stir.

"What's the matter with the wife?' said the coachman.

"I insist that you'll drive me without delay to the right place,' says my Auntie, plucking up spirit; she wasna going to submit to such usage.

"'The woman's daft!' says the man, looking round to the folk that were gathered about the inn door, who began to grin.

"'I'll no stir a foot,' says my Auntie.

"'We'll soon see that,' says the man, putting his foot on the lowest round of the ladder, for they had one here for the use of the passengers.

"I tell you I willna,' says my Auntie.

"'Then we'll have to pull you down, that's a',' said the man.

"'I daur you to lay a hand on me, you cheating vagabond,' says my Auntie, shaking her nieve (fist) in his face, for she was now in a state of desperation and her blood was up. 'I shanna be imposed upon twice, I can tell you. I paid you nine shillings and saxpence—at least, my gudebrither did—to take me to Yoker; sae leave me here at your peril.'

"My Auntie Kirsty's arm, as I have said, was

no light one; and the coachman, who was an undersized, wizened-looking creature, no doubt saw that it wouldna do to meddle with her, especially as she had the advantage in point of position. So he just stood on the pavement and abused her, and she scolded at him, till the noise brought a whole crowd round about the coach, laughing and hurrahing. The landlord and waiters of the inn, who had been attending to the passengers that wanted quarters there, came back to the door at sound of the din; and then came the landleddy herself. And there was the coachman stamping and raging on the pavement, and my Auntie Kirsty scolding and lamenting on the top of the coach; and every window and doorway in the Grassmarket crowded with folk looking on and laughing.

"'What's the matter with you, honest woman?' says the landleddy, who was a comfortable, red-cheeked, motherly-like woman.

"I'm a puir stranger, mem, from the parish of Boulder,' says my Auntie, thankful to see so respectable a person of her own sex to appeal to. 'I was gaun hame from Glasgow; and that blackguard's

driven me to Edinburgh instead of to Yoker, as he promised.'

"'It's a lee,' says the man; 'she's either drunk or daft.'

"'*Me* drunk, you ill-tongued vagabond!' says my Auntie Kirsty, who couldna bear such a reproach on her good name; 'I'm a' but blackfasting this day from either meat or drink; you had better no meddle wi' my character.'

"'There maun be some mistake,' says the landlord. 'Where did you take her up, Andrew?'

"'I reckon she came a' the way from Glasgow,' says the coachman, sulkily;' 'I ken nothing about her, nor how she got on the coach.'

"'What's your name, mistress?' says the landlord, looking up at her.

"'My name's Christian Pender,' says my Auntie, looking down at him; 'and naebody can say a word against it.'

"'Your name's no in the waybill, though,' says the landlord; 'my woman, I'se warrant you've ta'en the Edinburgh coach instead of the Carlisle ane.'

"'It's no possible!' cries my Auntie Kirsty.

'Oh, if I had but Rabby McCorkindale, for it's a' his wyte!' (fault).

"'Come down,' says the landleddy, who saw by my Auntie's look that she was a decent woman, but simple and landward bred, and who was sorry for her distress; 'come your ways down, my leddy; you'll get a comfortable bed here the night, and the coach will take you back to your Glasgow friends the morn.'

"'Will it no be ganging back the nicht, think ye, mem?' says my Auntie, anxiously.

"'Of course no,' says the landleddy.

"My Auntie gave a heavy groan when she heard this.

"'And are you perfectly sure that this very same coach will gang back to Glasgow the morn?' says my poor Auntie.

"'Quite sure,' says the landleddy; 'it'll leave at nine precisely; so come away, my woman, and never fear, for I'll look after you mysell.'

"'I'm muckle obleeged to you, mem,' says my Auntie Kirsty, after thinking a minute, 'but I canna do 't.'

"'But you canna get back to Glasgow the

night; it's no possible. You *maun* come down!' says the landleddy.

"'You maun just excuse me, mem,' says my Auntie, very ceevily.

"'But the coach is gaun into the yard!' says the landleddy.

"'It's a' ane' (all the same), says my Auntie, who was determined that nothing should separate her from the coach.

"'But you canna mean to sit there a' night?' says the landleddy, in wonder.

"'Weel-a-wat! I mean it,' says my Auntie; 'I ken weel enough,' she says, 'that if I leave the coach, I'll be put into some other ane the morn and whomled (rolled) farther awa yet from hame that I was such a fule as to leave; sae where the coach gangs, I'll gang.'

"And at that there was a great roar from the crowd that were standing round the coach and listening; and even the landleddy herself couldna help laughing at my Auntie's simplicity.

"'I'll take care of you, and put you into the right coach mysell,' said she, very kindly, after composing herself.

"'I'm obleeged to you mony times ower, mem, and mony times to that, for your civeelity,' says my Auntie; 'but there's something no chancy about this travelling, and I've just been out o' one trouble into another since ever I began it; so, though my backbane's like to break with sitting here, and my legs feel mair as if they were made o' cast iron than o' flesh and blood, here I sit till the morn. I'm willing enough,' says my Auntie, with some decent pride, 'to pay for the liberty, for I'm no without siller to meet my charges; and I have 'sponsible freends both in Glasgow and Boulder that will let nobody lose by me.'

"It was lost time either reasoning with or laughing at her. Her ignorance of town ways was too great, and her fears were far stronger than her sense of shame. Lose sight of the coach she wouldna—it was her only hope of getting back to her friends; so there she sat determinedly on the top of it, while the landlord and landleddy conferred together by the inn door.

"'And a bonnielike thing it was,' she used aye to say, 'to see me, a decent man's daughter, and ane with a character to uphold, raised up abune the

folks' heads like the thing I had seen in Glasgow, and a whole crowd o' idle senseless folk gecking (mocking) and glowering at me as if I had been a show. But for a' that they couldna get me off the coach till they had promised to let me sit as long as I liked in the inside. And then it was an awfu' job to accomplish, my banes being sae stiff and sair with the long sitting and the weary shoogling (shaking). Ane would have thought,' said my Auntie Kirsty, who could never forgive the Edinburgh folk for the sport they made of her, 'that 'they would never have done with the rowting (roaring) and hullaballooing they made when they saw me creep down the ladder and the landleddy oxter (elbow) me into the inside, which was a cosey place, for I had baith a cod (cushion) at my back and ane to sit on. They got up with another skirl as the inn servants ran the coach with me in't through a big archway into a great back yard ; but once there I was out o' the way o' the crowd, though I had still to bide the jeering o' the ostlers and such like. But the landleddy was very ceevil and considerate, I maun say, for she brought me baith tea and meat, and listened to a' my story.'

"'And so my poor Auntie Kirsty was shut up in the coach in the White Hart stable-yard, among the gigs and shandry-dans, postshays and horses; and forlorn and miserable enough, you may be sure, she felt.

"'What would they say at hame if they but kent where I am?' says she to herself when she was at last left alone, and the tears came into her een at the thought; 'but if it's my luck to win back to Glasgow, winna I gie it to Rabby McCorkindale.'

"At first she was very troubled with folk coming out of the inn to look at her, but once their curiosity was satisfied she was left in peace. The landleddy, no doubt, saw through my Auntie's character, for being about an inn must give one a deal of insight into human nature. She tried again to persuade her to come into the house, but failing in it, she just let her take her own way; and it was truly a mercy that my Auntie Kirsty fell into such Christian hands. She brought her a large plaid to wrap about her for fear she might be cold in the night; and, at my Auntie's request, a Bible, that being the only suitable reading, she considered, in her distressing circumstances. So my Auntie sat

and read, till the gloaming coming on she could no more see to make out the words. She was very weary and sleepy, and would fain have taken a nap, but she was frightened to sleep in such a strange place, for though the landleddy was doubtless a most respectable person, my Auntie couldna tell what kind of folk there might be about a great inn like that. She tried to shake drowsiness off her by nipping her arms, and cracking the joints of her fingers. At last, in her extremity, she had recourse to her prayers, and passed the time sometimes in that way, and sometimes in looking from the coach windows to see if all was safe about her.

"It was late before the yard was locked up for the night, for the White Hart Inn had much to do with posting. Lights streamed from the windows of the inn till late in the night, but at last everything was quiet, and my Auntie sat her leesome lane (lonely self) in the yard.

"'And a lang weary night it was,' she used to say. 'I tried my best to keep from sleeping, no kenning what calamity might befall me in the middle o' a nap, but I couldna aye keep my een

open. However, I never slept lang at a time, and I aye waukened with a start from dreaming that I was in my ain gude bed at hame, but couldna get my legs straughted (stretched) for some reason or other, to find mysell in the stable-yard o' the big inn, far awa from hame, while every living creature there, even baudrous (the cat), was sound sleeping, nae doubt, with ne'er a thought o' me in their heads. And then I often persuaded mysel' that some ane was stealing through the yard maybe to rob and murder me. Na, I could almost have sworn that once or twice I heard the handle o' the coach door tried, and each time my very heart stood still for a minute with the fright.'

"If it had been some years farther on, Mr. Matthew, when Burke and Hare were busy with their trade, her fears wouldna have been without reason. I mind the dread I had of being out after the darkening the whole winter after their murders were discovered, and every servant-lass in Edinburgh was as bad as myself.

"'Besides,' continued my Auntie Kirsty, 'there were queer sounds all round about me—cats mewing, dogs barking, and horses kicking in the stables.

To be sure, I was weel acquent with a' them, but no with a voice that every now and then rose in the air and gave me a wild start. I couldna tell where it came frae, or whether it belonged to beast or body, but I have been assured since then by them that should ken, that it must have been the watchman crying the hours on the street outside, though to my mind it was very eerie and kirkyard-like. Many a night,' would my Auntie say, 'I have sat up baith with the dying and the dead, and no been nearhand say gastly-thoughted as I was that night in the coach in the Grassmarket o' Edinburgh. For hadna I often read in the Scots Worthies o' the hangings, and beheadings, and torturings, that evil men had been suffered to practeeze there on God's saints in that dark and cloudy day of poor auld Scotland. There was an awfu' dread on my speerit as I thought about it. It seemed to me as if the very stanes in the walls o' the Grassmarket houses were witnesses o' what had been endured there for the sake of truth, and that the air was full o' a solemn voice, crying out in judgment because o' the sins and cruelties of that time, as weel as for the strange forgetfulness

and ungodly lightness o' the generation that now inhabited the awfu' spot.

"'Glad was I when the morning broke,' said my Auntie, 'and then, before onybody was stirring, I got the coach door opened, and washed my face, which was a great refreshment, at a pump waal in the yard. And then I got into the coach again, and read in the Bible to compose and comfort my mind, for I felt that I was a stranger in a strange land, far from home and friends, and no knowing what might befall me next, seeing that what had already happened to me was so surprising and uncommon. I often look up the same chapters in the Bible,' my Auntie would say, 'when it's my turn to stay at hame on the Sabbath days, and I have gone out with my book to the knowe to watch for the family coming back from the kirk These passages, and the thought o' yon time, make the summer air, as it were, to feel mair pleasant, and me mair thankful for the blessings o' a quiet hame and an honest neeborhood.'

"The landleddy came very early to see how my Auntie had passed the night, and was so kind as to bring her her breakfast and a redding kame

(comb); and, moreover, she promised her, as one of the inside seats wasna let, that she would get it back to Glasgow, which was a great boon; and more than all that, she would take nothing for either the coach or the meat. She must have had a real Christian heart, Mr. Matthew; I aye think o' her when I read the parable of the Good Samaritan. And, 'deed, she was no loser in the end, for a lad from Boulder parish going to Edinburgh the next year, my Auntie sent a prime cheese of her own making, with her compliments by him to the landleddy.

"At last it came to be time to get out the coach from the yard, and my Auntie was drawn through the archway as she had been the night before; and there was the whole yesterday's crowd o' dirty ne'er-do-weels—mixed, however, with some decenter folk—gathered on the causeway to see my Auntie set off on her travels again, and just as full of their jibes as they had been before. The passengers took their places, and as the coach started, the crowd up with a loud 'hurrah!' so that my Auntie didna know where to look for shame. It was a more comfortable journey than

the other, but glad and happy was she when it came to an end. My Auntie had made it up with the coachman, and had given him siller when she found he wasna to blame; and the landleddy had charged him to see that she was taken safe to her friends, so some one was sent with her to the Briggate.

"Rabby's dwelling-house was at the back of his shop, and he and Peggy and the bairns were sitting at their tea in the room there while his man watched the shop. They were talking about my Auntie Kirsty, who, they never doubted, had got safe to Braeside the night before, and wondering if ever she would venture to come to see them again, when suddenly the door opened, and in she came among them.

"'Preserve us a', Kirsty!' said Rabby, who was the first to see her, and who could scarcely believe his een, 'what's brought you back from hame?'

"'Ay, you may weel ask, Rabby McCorkindale!' says my Auntie, shaking her head seriously at him.

"'But what is it, Kirsty, woman?' says Peggy; 'we're just extraordinary glad to see you; but what's made you change your mind?'

"'Ask Rabby there,' says her sister, 'wha it was that put me on the Edinburgh coach instead of the Carlisle one, and has made me sit a' night in a yard in the Grassmarket o' Edinburgh!'

"'Eh, Kirsty!' says Rabby, gaping with astonishment.

"'Deed, you may weel think shame, Rabby McCorkindale,' says my Auntie; 'but I'm ower wearied to speak my mind to you the night. Gie me a cup o' tea, Peggy, and warm some water for my feet, and let me to my bed, for I think my legs will never be straught again.'

"So my Auntie Kirsty drank her tea without more words, bathed her feet, and went away to her bed, where she never stirred for ten hours, and then wakened, feeling something like herself. And when she had got her breakfast—and Peggy made her a good one—she started for home on her own legs, and she made Rabby, who hadna a word to say for himself, convoy her five miles as a peace offering. Peggy did not attempt this time to get her to stop, she saw it was useless.

"My Auntie stayed that night with her friend,

and next day at the gloaming she came in sight of the farm.

"'Eh, sirs!' cried one of the lasses, who was standing at the house-door after the milking; 'if there isna the mistress hersell coming up the road.'

"And in another minute every soul about the place—even John himself, who had been taking a nap as usual in the big chair—was out in the yard wondering to see her home so soon.

"'You may be thankful to see me,' quo my Auntie, 'for I have been in mony tribulations since we parted.'

"'Eh, sirs! what has happened to you; and whaur have you been?' cried everybody.

"'I have been among thieving Philistines in Glasgow, and mocking Ishmaelites in Edinburgh,' said my Auntie.

"'But what in a' the world took you to Edinburgh, Kirsty?' says John.

"'A coach took me, John, man, and I never left the coach till it brought me back again,' said my Auntie, who had a spice of fun in her, and was feeling light-hearted at being home. 'As to what was the cause o' my ganging there, you can speer

at Rabby McCorkindale the first time you see him.'

"'I canna understand it,' says John; 'it's like Samson's riddle, I think.'

"'Ye should have gane and seen Lunnon too, whaur the king and queen bide, when ye were on the travel, mistress,' says the younger of the servant-lassies.

"'Ye senseless tawpie!' says her neighbour; 'Bauldy here says that ye have to cross the sea to get to Lunnon, sae that it maun be at the very end o' the earth.'

"'Bauldy havers, then,' said Jamie, the upper ploughman, who read books, and was an oracle in the parish.

"'Weel,' said Bauldy, 'I ken this, that my first maister's son went to Lunnon, and he sailed frae the port o' Leith.'

"'Nae doubt,' said Jamie; 'and yet you may walk from this door to London, and no cross any water wider than the Tweed.'

"'D'ye say sae, lad?' cried both the lassies.

"'But where's your bundle with a' your things, that I put up for ye last Saturday night?'

says her cousin, wondering to see her empty-handed.

"'Where last year's snow is, for aught I ken,' said my auntie.

"And she would give them no more information till she had gone into the house and rested herself a blink in John's chair. A weary woman she truly was. 'It was waur,' she said, 'than a long day's darg at the kirn.'

"But when she told her story, wasna there a raising o' een and hands among them! And they declared that towns must be awful places for wickedness, and wondered how her friends could bear to stay in one. Yet Jamie thought that seeing such a grand historical place as the Grass-market of Edinburgh was worth all the trouble and distress that my Auntie Kirsty had been put to; and of course his fellow-servants agreed with him.

"And wasna my Auntie fain that night when she lay down in her own bed after all her troubles! And wasna she thankful next morning—a sweet, calm Sabbath one—on wakening to see the grass shining with gowans and glistening with dew from

her window! I trow she thought it the pleasantest sight she ever saw.

"Well, Mr. Matthew, from that day to the day she died—and she lived to be a very old woman—my Auntie Kirsty never left the farm except to go to the kirk. She had such a dread of travelling, that nothing would persuade her to go even the length of Yoker. Many a time would we young folk get her to tell us the story, which she aye did in almost the same words; till from hearing it often I got it at last by heart, and could tell it just as well as herself. And she used aye to finish with warning us of the dangers and iniquities of cities, holding up the innocence and pleasures of a country life in comparison. And, weel-a-wat, Mr. Matthew, from all that I have seen of towns—and I have been between thirty and forty years in one—I dinna think she was far wrong."

A TALE OF HALLOWE'EN.

CHAPTER I.

JENNY ON HAUGHEAD ROAD.

MY housekeeper is rich in old country stories, and has a wonderful memory for the events and traditions of her youth. One of these she narrated to me some evenings ago, and I shall endeavour to relate it here, and as much as possible in her own words.

We had been conversing on some of our ancient Scottish customs, but especially on the *freits* connected with Hallowe'en.

"You'll mind the Haughead farm, Mr. Matthew, in old Mr. Maunder's parish (said Nelly); the farm with the deep, black moss behind it, that Jenny, the tinkler bowlwoman, was lost in one winter? No? Well, I thought you would have minded Jenny, for all the country side knew her; but, to

be sure, you were just a bairn at that time. I dinna think there was a gentleman's house or farmsteading within a range of thirty miles that Jenny didna call regularly at. She was a muckle dragoon of a woman, with a griesly grey beard peeping out from under her tattered straw bonnet, and she swore like the worst among them; it was just awful to hear her when she had got the drop drink in her head. I suspect it was owing to it that she came by her death, poor creature. It was supposed that she had wandered off the road at nightfall, and been smoored in the moss; for her cart and cuddie (donkey) were found there some days after she had been seen by anybody, the poor beast almost dead with cold and hunger. But Jenny was never again seen in the flesh, though many folk threepit they had met with her spirit; but as it was aye in the gloaming, when the grey stump of a skaithed tree will look like something no *canny*, they may have been mistaken. Howsoever, the moss got a bad name after the accident; and so did the farm, for that matter, for it had been a great howff of Jenny's, who slept oftener in the barn there than anywhere else.

"The Haughead farm was a cantie (cheerful) place, though. It was a snug, two-storied, thatched house standing on the top of a brae—the old steading's down years since, and a fine new one is in its place—with many outhouses and stacks round about it. And a blithe sight it was to see its windows glancing with light, and the men and women servants moving about the barnyard with their lanterns—we called them *bowits* in my young days—as they went to supper the horse or to milk the kye on a winter's e'en. No wonder they put up so many beggars at night, for it wasna easy to pass the place by, especially as the road led on through the moss, where Jenny, it was understood, might be on the walk. I have known as many as four ragged gaberlunzies in the barn at one time, and all with their parritch and milk both at night and in the morning. But they were open-handed folk, the Johnstones, and never grudged a poor body a bite and a sup.

"And in the daytime it was a cheerful bit. There was a grand view from the front of the house—you could see down the strath for miles to the very foot of the hills, and could count the windings of the water

as it glistened in the sun. And when the lights and shadows on the woods and hills, with the smoke rising here and there from some farm or cot-house among them so quiet and peaceful like;' with, may be, some wee bird far up in the air above its nest, and the cows feeding or lying in the grass all down by the waterside, and the men and horses busy in the fields. Oh, Mr. Matthew, but they made a heartsome sight! It was the Borgie water that ran there, a bonnie mountain stream that sometimes overflowed its banks. A heavy spate carried away more than half of the stooks in one of Gavin Johnstone's parks one wet harvest; but some suffered at the same time who could less afford it than Gavin, who was a bien (thriving) comfortable man.

"But behind the house, as I said before, was the black moor, and, well-a-wat, it was a dreary, lonesome bit. It was little frequented, and it was a rarity to see any moving object there save the pee-sweeps (lapwings) and the grouse. The view to the back was as gruesome as the view to the front was bright. But doubtless the story of Jenny had prejudiced us all against the moor, for there's a still-

ness and pure caller air on a moss that is wonderfully refreshing and reviving to the spirits.

"They had a bit bonnie garden too, the Johnstones, and as it was to the back, it was like a dainty flower in a barren wilderness. And there was an old fir wood that covered one side of the brae, that I had a great liking to. It was just a pleasure on a warm summer day to sit on the moss at the foot of the trees and watch the sunshine glinting on the grass, and listen to the singing of the birds, and the soughing of the wind through the boughs. Can you tell me now, Mr. Matthew—you that have had college learning and should ken everything—how it happens that of all the trees in the wood, the fir-tree makes the most melancholy sound? To my mind it's like the far-off murmuring of the great ocean, and I have often felt the tears rise into my een as I listened to it, though I had a kind of pleasure in my heart at the time. Maybe some folk would laugh at me for an old haverel to speak of such fancies, but it is a thing I have often noticed and never could account for.

"Oh! but it was a bonnie wood that, for the grass was so full of moss, and the trees were so grand and

flourishing! There's a great beauty in the colour of the fir-tree bark, Mr. Matthew; I mean of the real old Scottish fir, our own country's tree. I'm no speaking of these new-fangled pines and larches that they brought from foreign parts, they're ower trim and garden-like for my taste, and only fit for gentlemen's policies; but there's a red glow and a warmth of colour about the rough bark of an old spreading fir-tree that you'll no match in a whole forest of others.

"Then the turf in the wood was little trodden on, and felt like velvet under the foot, and it was just shining in the spring time with primroses; and the bank that sloped from the wood to the road all the length of the brae was a perfect picture with wild roses and pale blue violets—you could gather a posy there in less time than I take to tell it. I used to envy the birds that built their nests in that wood, and often thought how sweet it would be to live in a bower there like "Bessy Bell and Mary Gray" in the sang. But I was a foolish hempie in my teens then; and I forgot that summer doesna last the whole year, and that Haughead wood would be cold winter quarters. Hech,

sirs! but everything seems bright to the young; and 'deed we should be glad of that same, Mr. Matthew, for trouble will come to them, sooner or later.

"The Johnstones werena a large family. There were just the old folk and two sons and a daughter besides the servants. But the heads of the house were so blithe and hearty that they made the place cheery. Gavin Johnstone, good old man, had aye an innocent joke and banter for all he met, and the mistress herself was the best at a crack in all the country side. Well-a-wat! a tea-drinking there was a ploy indeed, and their kirns (harvest-homes) were aye the merriest in the parish.

"She would put up with no idle set, though, would the mistress; the lassies might play themselves when their work was done, but no before. It was 'Take tent to your turns!' through the day; but at night the mistress was aye ready to encourage any simple diversion among them; and of all the cheerful firesides I have sat at, Haughead was the foremost, for the family had not got into the new-fashioned ways of sitting ben the house by them-

selves, but lived in the kitchen with their servants. Such singing and bantering and story-telling there was round the ingle at night, when the lassies had got to their wheels, and the lads to the mending of their horse gear, or any other job they had in hand. There wasna a clash (gossip) in the whole parish that didna find its way to Haughead—you see, they had so many visitors dropping in on them; and I'm sure if old Mr. Maunder, their minister, who was never thought much of as a divine in the country side—it was said he got his kirk from preaching another man's sermon—could have heard them criticising his discourses on the Monday nights, it might have done him muckle good.

"That was the minister, maybe you'll mind, that went by the name of Auld Nick in the country. He had a sermon on the character of Nicodemus that he used to preach on every special occasion; it was his best, you see. Well, he was on his way one morning to preach on the fast day in a neighbouring parish, with *it* in his pouch. As he came near the manse, he heard some folk talking on the other side of a high hedge, where was a short cut

to the kirk; and being a curious (inquisitive) body, he trod very softly, that he might hear what they were saying to each other.

"'Wha's to preach for us the day?' says one old wife to another.

"'Hoot! wha suld it be but "Auld Nick"?' says her neighbour.

"I trow Mr. Maunder never preached that sermon again; but for all that, the name stuck by him.

"Well, as I was saying, the mistress was very good to her servants, and particularly when any of them, as would sometimes happen, got taken up with sweethearts, poor things, she wasna hard on them. She minded—what most mistresses forget—that she had been once young herself, and that a colt must have its fling before it settles down to draw the plough, and a kittling its play before it grows into the sober old cat that lies beside your fire. So many a night she put on the gathering peat with her own hands, and other bits of work, without making a stir about it. And I dare say she wasna the worse served for 't—she was a wise woman, was the mistress! while many a cantie marriage was made up at the farm.

"Gavin's only daughter, Bell, was the beauty of the parish. Oh, but she was a bonnie lassie, with een like diamonds, black shining hair as soft and glossy as silk, and a skin like the very cream. And then she had a colour in her face like that of a wild rose, and such teeth when she opened her mouth to laugh—and at one time she was aye laughing—so small and white and regular. They were as white as milk; and you ken, Mr. Matthew, there's a verse of the Bible which says, 'His teeth shall be white with milk.' I trow Bell had no other thing to whiten them with. Bell's shape was so easy and genty that folk that didna ken her would often take her for a leddy; but it wasna by lacing herself tight or sitting with her hands in her lap that Bell came by it. No, no, Bell had her work to do, and she did it well; it would have been strange if she didna with so clever a mother.

"Bell, you may be sure, had wealth of sweethearts. All the farmers' sons about were running after her; and maybe her head was a wee turned by it. She was naturally a kindly well-conditioned lassie, though very fond, like most young

folk, of ploys and merrymakings. She was a light-hearted thing, aye going about her work singing like a bird; and the young men said that a sight of her face was as blithesome as summer. There never was a cheerier creature at one time; and 'deed she was as blithe in her short gown and homespun coat at her work as when she had got on all her pearlings at night.

Ill-natured folk didna scruple to say she was light-headed, but that wasna true. Bell knew she was bonnie. How could the lassie help it as long as there was a looking-glass in her father's house, and so many young fellows doing their best to tell her o't? but she just joked and laughed with her joes as she did with everybody. She gave no more encouragement to one than another, unless it might be to Allan Dempster, the young miller. Folk did say that she had a liking to him, but nobody kent truly, not even her mother, who was quick enough at the uptake. Allan and Bell had first got acquainted at some ploy, and the lad had been coming about her for more than a year; but at any rate Bell seemed in no hurry to settle. Maybe she didna like to give up her liberty so

soon, or to relinquish all her joes for the sake of one, even though she might like him the best. After all, I fear she was no better than a flirting cuttie, or she would have preferred one true loving heart and a quiet comfortable home of her own to such vanities.

"Allan's father was a miller down the water; he was a rich old carle; his wife was dead, and the lad was his only bairn. He had a long tack (lease) of the mill, and everybody thought that Allan was a good match even for Gavin Johnstone's daughter. But there's many a slip between the cup and the lip, as what I have to tell will prove.

"As far as looks could win favour, Allan had little cause to fear. He was as comely a lad as you could see at kirk or market, straight and tall and manly-looking, with a bit laughing twinkle in his blue een that took with folk wonderfully. He was the best curler in the parish, too; it was just beautiful to see how nicely he balanced the stone, and with what a birr he made it flee from his hand along the ice. The parish was aye sure to win the game when Allan Dempster played, and I have heard that he could even beat the Laird of Drip-

deen himsell, who was counted the best player on that side of Borgie water. And Allan was a douce lad; he was never absent from the kirk, and though he had a spunk of fun in him, he never allowed it to carry him o'er far. He helped his father with the mill—they had a man forbye—and, well-a-wat, they had a braw, well-plenished house at the mill town, for I was once in't before the quarrel with Bell; she sinned against her own mercies, poor lassie.

"What they disagreed about I canna tell—nobody could—but I have often jealoused that Allan had complained, and reasonably enough, if they were troth-plighted, of the encouragement she gave to others besides himsel, and that they had come to words about it, for all at once Allan gave up coming to the Haughead. Bell, of course, wasna to be hindmost with her pride, so she held up her head and tossed it saucily whenever she met Allan Dempster—ay, even on the very Sabbath day at the kirk, as if 'the better day the better deed!' And no content with that, what does she do but take up with Jamie Gourlay, old Deanside's son, that folk had matched her with

before she knew Allan, and at last the clash came to be in the parish that they were to be married. I have no doubt now that the poor misguided lassie thought she was taking the surest way of humbling her former sweetheart, and bringing him back to her; but if so she was sore, sore mistaken; and the consequences might be a warning to all young lassies no to let their pride carry them o'er far. They say lovers' quarrels are soon made up again; this one wasna.

"Allan, it was kent long afterwards, took the report very sore to heart; and 'deed everybody else as well as him believed it. He was o'er much hurt, it's like, with her fickleness to think of trying to make her change her mind again, but he couldna endure the place after hearing what was likely to happen, so you'll no hinder him one fine morning from setting off to the borough town where a recruiting sergeant was busy, and listing himself for a sodger. No doubt the poor lad felt that he couldna stay at home and see the lass that had once been his married to another man. He went about it very quietly, and his own letter to his father brought the first news of what he had done,

for Greenshiels parish was good ten miles from the town, and news was long of travelling in those days. The letter was written from the seaport just before they were to embark. He gave his father no reason for his conduct, but that he was wearying for a change and behoved to have it, and told him that he was going with the regiment he had entered to Spain to fight the French. He hoped, he said, to return in a year or two, and he asked his father to forgive him and pray for him.

"Poor old John Dempster! it was a great surprise and grief to him to hear that his only son had become a sodger. Nobody could account for it, for Allan had been such a steady and kindly lad that a roving disposition was the last thing people would have suspected in him; but now all were agreed that 'ye never ken folk.' John took on very ill about it, and for long looked so dowie and broken down that everybody pitied him. But as Allan said nothing in his letter about Bell, he never suspected that she was to blame in the matter. All his desire now was to read the newspapers, and hear the news from Spain. The sough (rumour) of a battle there kept him from sleeping for nights,

and from being a hearty stout old carl, he changed into a frail feckless man.

"Letters came from Allan, but they were at long intervals, as they behoved to be, seeing that the army was almost aye on the march, and the country there in a most unsettled state. But oh, how these letters were prized, and lent about from house to house till the whole parish had them most by heart! Gavin Johnstone himself had them to read, but little did he suppose what an interest his bonnie daughter took in them. Her name, she saw, was never mentioned in them, and she couldna learn from them whether Allan had forgotten her or no, or if he knew she was still unmarried. But she thought that his father, who kent nothing of what had been between them, wasna likely to have told him in his letters. Poor Bell! she was even more to be pitied than the old man, for he could speak of his grief, but she had to shut up hers in her bosom.

"From the moment the news of Allan's departure had reached Haughead the poor lassie had lost heart. It came upon her with an awful suddenness, and if her folk hadna been so taken up with

lamenting and wondering about it, they must have noticed the effect it had on her; but, fortunately for Bell's pride, which couldna stand pity, they did not notice. The first two or three weeks were the worst for preserving her secret, for then everybody was talking and conjecturing about Allan, and grieving for his old father who was left alone in his old age. But after a while the matter was less spoken about, unless just when a letter had come.

"She would fain have persuaded herself at first that it was all a dream, and that she would see him again in the kirk on Sabbaths as she had done since they quarrelled. Whiles she thought that he had maybe just pretended to enlist to try her, and that ere long he would come back and all would be as before; and when this notion came into her mind her former pride and anger would rise, and she would think of how she would humble him yet, and make him glad to be friends with her again on her own terms. Poor Bell! the leaven hadna yet left her, but it wasna long before it was well weeded out.

"She had to give up this hope at last, though she clung to it till the first letter reached his father

from Spain; and then came the wild remorse and the fearful desolation of a forsaken heart that has itself to blame. She thought on all the provocation that she had given Allan Dempster by trifling and sporting with his leal affection; how she had tried to seem cold and indifferent when she was far from feeling it; how she had been the cause of separating him from his father, who, she heard, was just bowed down with his grief; and she felt that if Allan fell in the war she would have his death to answer for. It was an awful thought. Many a time did the poor lassie hide herself among the trees in the fir wood, and there, unseen by anybody, greet as if her very heart was breaking. None kent what she suffered till long after, not even her own family. Of course they saw that a great change had come over her; they couldna but do that, for her bonnie black een were grown dull and heavy—no wonder, with the greeting—and her cheeks had lost all their colour; but the long coldness between her and Allan, and the courting with Jamie Gourlay, kept them from putting it to the right cause. ...

"Many nonsense things were said about her, and

many folk thought that Gavin Johnstone was to lose his only daughter in a dwining. It was no unlike it: she that used to be the merriest lassie on the Borgie water, with the lightest foot in a reel, and the blithest laugh of any, was now become dowie, easily wearied, and fond of being alone. Some said that the cast of an evil eye had been on her, or that she had gotten a glint of Jenny some night that she had been on the walk; nothing less, they thought, could have made such a change on the bonnie cantie young lassie.

"It was a sore distress to her father and mother, though they werena such fools to believe that her looks could have been altered by any such causes, or that it was their duty to sew a slip of rowan-tree round her neck to preserve her from the influence of evil spirits. They thought she needed a change, and so they proposed that she should go for a week or two to a cousin of her mother's —my cousin twice removed, he was, Mr. Matthew —who lived at a place about twelve miles off, where the air was very fresh and caller. To please them she went; but she came back at the end of the time as pale and thoughtful like as ever. The

parish couldna understand the meaning o't—so they just put the wyte o't upon Jenny. Everybody agreed that the Haughead had never been a chancy bit since Jenny's death; and as time went on there came to be far fewer visitors there at e'en than there used to be. Bell's sweethearts dropped off one by one as they found she would give them no encouragement; even Jamie Gourlay, who hung on longest, thinking things might take another turn, was at last compelled to follow the others. And yet Bell didna seem to mind; the lassie was strangely altered.

"Three years had gone by since Allan had left the country, and for the last six months of them no word had come from him. The letters might have miscarried—that was the only hope. The poor old man his father was in deep tribulation; but nobody dreamt of pitying Bell, whose very heart was sick and faint, no kenning whether Allan was alive or dead. She was nearly distracted with the uncertainty, and with the false courage of desperation would have dared anything almost to have her doubts settled either one way or another.

CHAPTER II.

PULLING STOCKS IN THE KAIL-YARD.

"HALLOWE'EN came round—well do I mind that night!—and as usual there was a merry gathering of young folk at Haughead. There were the Deanside lads and lassies; Jamie had now got a farm of his own in a different county, and of course wasna one of them; there were the Dicks o' Hazelbrae; Ringan Jardine's family from the Todholes; the Elliots of Bogleshole ford; and others besides, whose names I canna at present bring to mind. But there were walth (numbers) o' us, and a bonnie splore we kicked up before the night was by. Though Bell was changed, the rest of the family werena, but were just as ready as ever for any simple diverson like this; and maybe they thought it might do her good, for she was a petted bairn with all her friends.

"It was a cantie sight to see the house shining

with light as I and some others came up the brae. It was a cold night, but the mere thought of the great rousing fires, and of the kindly welcome before us, made us warm and cheery. I mind, however, being awful frightened at the thought of meeting Jenny in the shade of the fir wood, and creeping very close to my neighbours; but I canna say that I saw any thing worse than mysell either then or at any other time. None o' the rest seemed to like the darkness of the trees any better than I did, and we werena long of speeling the brae. But when we entered the house and saw the preparations the mistress had made for the company, the whole of our tongues—and they hadna been quiet before except in the gloom of the wood—were quickened with very joyfulness. Such a grand tea as was spread out on that long mahogany table in the parlour! Such loads of hung beef, and cheese, and buttered toast that must have taken the lassies an hour to make, and was now keeping warm on servers before the fire! Such farls of shortbread and mountains of currant bun, no to mention sponge biscuit and jeelie! I trow there was nothing shabby ever at Haughead—the mistress

aye put her best foot foremost when she had company; and 'deed when all were served there wasna muckle over, for a walk on a November night or a hurl in a cart is wonderfully improving to the appetite.

"Bell was just as quiet as was her usual now, but I couldna help thinking, young as I was—I was a gey gleg gilpie, though, o' my age—that though her cheek was pale, and her merry smile gone, she was far bonnier than ever. There was a mournful kind of look in her face, and a gentleness in her manner as she helped her mother to serve the folk, that someway went to my heart, and I could have grat as I looked at her. I saw, too, that the young men would fain have made up to her, but she wouldna let them.

"It was just the same when we went butt to the kitchen, which was all redd up for our Hallowe'en games; she aye tried to keep in the background, she that used to be the foremost in every diversion. I would fain have tried to cheer her up, but I was some years younger than her, and I was bashful, like most lassies of my age. However, I couldna keep from watching her. She seldom spoke un-

less she was first spoken to, and I noticed that she aye made a full stop before answering, as if her thoughts had been far away and she had to call them back to consider what had been said to her. Poor thing! little did the thoughtless creatures about her ken what an awful dread and terror were weighing at that very time on her heart.

"We began the night first of all, of course, with dooking for apples. The mistress had a big washing boyne half full o' water set in the middle of the kitchen floor, and about a dozen apples were tummult into it at a time. We took our turns of dooking for them, and, well-a-wat! it was good fun to see how drookit some got, both lads and lassies, the water streaming down from their hair and lugs (ears) and een, with plunging their heads too far down in hunting for some red-checked apple that they couldna catch, though it bobbed against their lips. Such choking, and rubbing of een, and laughing as there was among them! The din might have been heard half a mile off, and must have disturbed Jenny if she was on the walk.

"The muckle-mouthed ones had the best luck, and there was one lad—they called him Sandy Scott—that grippit two at once twice running; but Sandy had a mouth from lug to lug, that was shaped more like a codfish's than a man's. And amidst all the fun, and when everybody else was just shaking their sides with laughing, I never saw Bell smile but once, and that was when wee Jeanie Dick, a bit fair-haired bairnie of six years old grippit the last apple—it was a very small one—that half a dozen grown folk had failed to catch. She afterwards took the bit bairn by the hand and kept her beside her, though she seldom spoke to her.

"Well, when we were done with the apples—and 'deed my jaws were sore with the gaping for two days after it—away we went in a body to the garden to pull the stocks. But I noticed that Bell didna come farther with us than to the end of the house, but waited there till we came back; and I think nobody observed it but me, for it was a dark night, although there were stars out. I was sure there were traces of tears on her face as the light fell on it when we entered the house again.

"A bonnie gap we made in the mistress's kail-yard—I hope the kail-pot didna suffer for't during the winter. It was a real diversion to see us wading among the stocks, all of us as earnest about it as if our future lot really depended on the choice we made. As for me, I grippit in the darkness an old bowed runt of a stock—you ken, Mr. Matthew, it's the rule to take what you first put hands on—that I was black affronted to let the others see; and 'deed they made plenty of jokes about it before the night was by. An old crook-backit man was to be my weird (lot), they all said, and a poor one too, for there was little earth sticking to the roots o't; but truly, Mr. Matthew, he's never made his appearance yet, and I think never will. But I was muckle inclined to lay the stock about Jock Elliot's ears, for he was an awful fellow for fun, and I thought he never would give over with his bantering.

"When we had tasted the stocks to ken the tempers of the husbands and wives we were to have, and had fixed them in a row above the outer door for the names—there were at least twenty of them —we took to the clean and dirty water and empty

bowl; then to the dropping of the egg, and syne to burning nuts. And, well-a-wat! the mistress had provided a good stock of them. Well, as we were busy with the nuts, I got a glint of a face outside the window watching us. I saw it just for a moment, as it were, while the light of the fire happened to glimmer on the een, which I could have sworn were fixed on Bell, who was sitting sad and quiet like behind her mother, and then it vanished. Bell herself didna notice it; her look was cast down on the floor, and she was evidently thinking sore sore about something. I said nothing about the face to anybody, supposing it might be some neighbour's servant-lad, who had stolen up the brae to have a look at the fun, but wouldna like to have it kent; and because I feared Jock's bantering about Jenny. When we went out to pull the stocks I had seen some one steal away out of sight among the stacks. I was persuaded it was a man, or I might have thought about Jenny and raised an outcry, for I was no wiser about ghosts in those days than my neighbours; and the powers o' darkness, it was always understood, were more than usually busy on a Hallow-

e'en night. The recollection of this made me watch the window for a time; but there was so much fun going on round about me that at last I forgot all about the face, and even about Bell.

"Some one after awhile began to talk—it must have been Jock, who was foremost in all mischief—about going out to sow hempseed or to wind a clew in the kiln; and even asked if none of the lassies would venture out as far as a stone's cast on the moor, where it chanced that three lairds' lands—two of them were but small lairds, the third was Gavin's own landlord—met at a burn—they called it the Mossy water—to dip her sark sleeve. You ken that's an old Hallowe'en custom, Mr. Matthew, and I have known some bold enough to practise it. One woman I knew lang syne, would threep (insist) to her dying day, that as she was lying awake that night watching the sark that was drying before the fire, the likeness of her future gudeman came and turned it; but he was stopping in the house at the time, and maybe it was just himsell. However, she aye said it wasna, and got angry if anybody contradicted her. None of us lassies were brave enough to venture, and muckle

laughing the lads raised about our cowardice, and none was louder than Tam Walkinshaw, a soft, turnip-headed fallow, who, everybody kent, was frightened for his own shadow. Gavin Johnstone was sitting in the bunker by the fireside and listening to what was going on, whiles putting in a word and a joke. He kent Tam well.

"'You wouldna like a handfu' o' hempseed yoursell to saw, would ye, Tam?' says the old man pawkily (slyly) to him, to our great diversion: 'if you would like to ken your fortune, I'm sure you're welcome to it.'

"It was a sight to see the change that came over Tam's face when Gavin spoke: he shrank back like a snail into its shell when you touch it, and his very lips turned blue.

"'Me!' said he, stammering: he had aye a kind of hesitation in his speech, but now his words gurgled out as thick as the barm from a beer bottle in warm weather. 'Me! I—I would hae nae objections, only—only ye see——'

"'Hoots, man! you're surely no frichted for Jenny—you that were sae ready to laugh at others a minute since?' says Jock Elliot, winking to his neighbours.

"'I'm—I'm no frichted,' says Tam, shaking, however, in every limb of him; but—but, you see, I'm no clear a'thegither in my conscience about it. The minister says that thae customs are heathenish and an opening to the enemy; and queer things have happened on Hallowe'en, if a' tales be true. I—I mind hearing tell of a lass that went to the barn by hersell to weigh three weights o' naething. She set both the doors wide open, as suld be I am tell'd, and to the weights she ga'ed; but just as she was at the work, what does she see in the moonlicht but her ain coffin moving between the doors instead of the likeness of a gudeman! and as sure's death she was in her coffin before the same time next year.'

"We all grewed at this story, and most of us lassies couldna help casting timorsome looks behind us—for you see Haughead *was* thought an unchancy place—but that unbelieving fellow Jock wasna to be daunted by such a narration.

"'Toots, man!' he said, 'that was just a woman's fancy, and you may be sure she was o'er frichted to ken what she saw. But a bauld stout-hearted chield like you now might stay a whole nicht in

the barn, and no a thing daur to steer you. I'll wad you a plack (wager for a small sum) if you like to venture.'

"'I'll—I'll hae nothing to do wi't,' says Tam, positively, and drawing back into the corner where he was sitting; 'it's clean against my conscience, I tell ye; but since you're sae venturesome, neebor, what for do you no try it yoursell?'

"This seemed turning the laugh upon Jock, but, my certy! he was of a different nature from Tam.

"'Me!' says he, starting up, 'gie's the key, and you'll soon seen whether I'm frichted for either ghaist or goblin.'

"'You're no serious, Jock?' says Gavin Johnstone, laughing.

"'But I am,' says Jock; 'I never tried the freit, and now I'm determined to do't.'

"'Weel, then,' says the farmer, 'you'll get the key hanging on the pin behint the door there, and be sure you lock the barn when you leave it.'

"'Oh, dinna gang, dinna gang,' cried most of the lassies, and especially little Katie Gourlay, who, we all thought, had a more than common kindness for Jock, and who had turned as red as a rose that

night when we had burnt them together at the nuts; 'Oh, dinna gang, Jock, or you'll maybe hae cause to rue it.'

"But Jock just laughed at them, and went for the key, while we lassies sat astonished at his daring; but when he looked behind the door, as the old man had tell'd him, the key was away.

"'Somebody maun hae taken it,' says Gavin, 'for I hung it there wi' my ain hands this very afternoon. Is ony ane out?'

"We all looked round to see who had been so venturesome, and who did we miss but Bell! Nobody had seen her leave the kitchen, but doubtless she had taken the opportunity of slipping away when we were all busy with our cracks and games.

"'Sirs! what's taken the foolish lassie out on sic an errand?' said her mother, anxiously. And we all looked on one another strangely, but none of us spoke. If it had been any other than Bell, I think nobody would have minded much; but her that was now so quiet and pensy to try such a wild kind o' freit seemed to strike us all as something no canny—as if the lassie wäs *fey* and no long for

this world. Besides, Mr. Matthew, there were many folk even then—and no to say strict religious professors either—who thouhgt it sinful to try such spells, and likely to bring down a judgment on them that used them.

"'The lassie's no strong,' said Gavin, gravely, rising to leave the house; 'and I maun see that she doesna get a fright.'

"But just as he spoke there came a wild skreigh from the direction of the barn that made us all jump up from our seats and the hair stand on our head. There wasna a word said, but Bell's two brothers dashed to the door, and we after them, pell-mell, as fast as we could drive. The mother was wringing her hands and greeting, but the old man seemed as if he was stricken by the dead palsy, for he sank down in his seat and could neither move nor speak.

"Well, out we got into the farmyard like a flock o' frightened sheep following their leaders, and keeping close together for mutual protection, when what should we see in the starlight but a man coming staggering across the yard from the barn carrying somebody in his arms! It was o'er dark

to see what he was, and we all stood still for a minute glowering at him, most of us feeling muckle inclined to run back into the house, and expecting I'se warrant, to see some terrible sight.

"'Make way!' cries the man, in a loud commanding voice, as we were all gathered about the door. And somehow we did make way, and on he came among us, and who was in his arms but Bell! Her head was hanging o'er his arm like a broken lily, and she was evidently in a kind of dwam (faint). He passed through us all, looking neither to the right nor left, and even her very brothers hadna a word to say to him, for his manner was like that of a man beside himself; and straight into the kitchen he went, where the light of the blazing fire fell on him, and we saw then that he was a sodger, for he was drest in regimentals. He took no notice of anybody, but down he knelt on one knee on the floor, with her resting against the other, and his arms about her, and looked into her face. We couldna see his, for his back was to us; and there we all stood behind him, staring and gaping like a set o' haverels overcome with surprise. No one moved to help Bell

not even her own friends; but they just glowered like the rest to see a stranger taking on as he did, I canna tell what had come over us, especially over her brothers, who had plenty of smeddum (spirit) in them for ordinary; but I reckon they were just dumbfoundert like others, and maybe thought there was something no canny in what they saw, considering what Bell had been about in the barn.

"'I have killed her!' said the stranger, in such a desperate voice. But the sound o't seemed to reach Bell's ears even though she was in a trance, for she gave a deep sigh and suddenly opened her een—I could see her face, though no his, from where I was—and fixed them on his face with such a look, I will never forget it; and her lips moved, but no sound came from them. And then, as if her strength had returned to her all at once, she raised herself up, and forgetting all about the onlookers, she flung her arms about his neck, and laying her head on his bosom, she sobbit and grat as if her very heart would burst. Truly it was a moving sight to look at the pair, for he still kept his arms about her, and 'deed it seemed to me

that he was greeting himsell. We all looked at one another wonderingly, and then at her friends, but they appeared as little able to account for what they saw as ourselves. However, her two brothers now made a start forward as if they would have taken Bell away from the man. But just at this moment a queer thing happened.

"There was a poor natural (idiot) that lived with the family. A quiet, inoffensive thing she was, poor creature! Her name was Jean Gibson; her friends were ill off, and hadna been very kind to her; so Jean, from making a howff at times of the farm, and helping with the tattie (potato) lifting and such like jobs, came to this at last, that she wouldna leave it. She would only work when it pleased hersell; but her bit meat and claes didna cost muckle. The Johnstones were very good to her, and from less to more she had been about ten years in the house. She had been crouching all night, as was her custom, in a corner of the kitchen, watching the fun that was going on, and munching the apples that the mistress had given her. But now, all at once, just as what I have described was taking place, up she starts out o' the neuk, and

with a loud guffaw of a laugh—she was an extraordinary laugher, Jean—she claps both her hands on the sodger's shoulders.

"'Walcome hame, Allan Dempster,' she says: 'wha was to think o' seeing you at our Hallowe'en!'

"'Allan Dempster!' cried the old man, making a start out of his seat as he heard the name.

"'Allan Dempster!' cried the mistress, and she ran forward.

"'Allan Dempster!' cried we all; and there was instantly a crowding round him, and a hand-shaking, and a roaring of welcome that must have been about as deafening to him as the Frenchies' guns. And in the midst o' it all Bell disappeared from the kitchen; but her mother had now got her een opened, and soon followed her. And where did she find the poor trembling lassie but on her knees in her own wee room returning thanks to God!

"And it was truly Allan Dempster himsell—very brown with the sun and with the exposure to wind and weet that—wae's me!—he had gone through in foreign parts; but brawer and more manly-like than ever, for he had gotten the commanding look

of a sodger. And they had made him a sergeant already on account of his bravery and good education—for Allan was a grand reader and writer and counter when at the school. But they used aye to say that Scotch lads were sure to get on on account of their learning if they were steady and could keep from the drink. But to think that nobody knew him at first but Bell and Jean, and him only three years away! However, we never had seen him in regimentals or with moustachers before, nor had we a good look at his face; and who, as Jean said, was expecting to see him then? Hech, sirs! you'll maybe think me an old soft-headed fool, Mr. Matthew, but I canna help the tears from happing down my cheeks yet, when I call it to mind.

"It wasna long till Gavin got the punch-bowl filled in honour of Allan, and we were all gathered round the fire, and him in the midst of us. And then such a questioning he had to go through! for we were all keen to hear about the fighting and the wonders of other lands. Bell didna make one of us, though; she wouldna come back again. I trow she felt shame both to face us and Allan

Dempster. To be sure, there was a wonderful enlightenment in all our minds that night on the cause of her long dwining; and 'deed none seemed more astonished than her own family, to judge by the looks they cast at one another. But they were very kind and cordial in their manner to Allan, who, though at first somewhat blate and confused like, was soon his old self, and cracking away like anything—no that his thoughts didna sometimes wander and his ee travel gey often to the door; but all his wishing couldna bring back Bell again among us.

He told us that after his regiment was landed he had got leave of absence, and that he had only reached home that day. He stayed with his father till dark, and after hearing all the country news from him he had come up to the Haughead; but seeing such a company o' folk there he hadna liked to come in. The truer story, I reckon, was that he wanted to see Bell alone at first, and was watching outside for an opportunity. No doubt he must have learned from his father that there had been no truth in the story of her marriage, and also about the change that had come over her

soon after he left the country; and putting one thing to another, maybe he began to suspect the cause of it. Of course it was his face I had seen at the window; and when it was put to him by Jock Elliot, he confessed, though no very readily, that seeing Bell go to the barn by herself, and guessing her errand on a Hallowe'en night, he had put himself in her way there and given her a fright.

"'Hers was a better ghaist than your woman's, Tam,' said Jock Elliot, giving a dunsh with his elbow to Tam Walkinshaw, who was sitting beside him; 'there'll be a joining here instead o' a parting, or I'm muckle mistaken.'

"I must do Jock the justice to say that this was the only joke he made on the subject that night at Haughead, though on our ways home be sure everybody had plenty to say about it.

"Well, to cut my story short, Mr. Matthew, it was na long before old John Dempster got Allan's discharge bought. It was a mercy, for Bonnyparty was then living quietly at Elba, and nobody knew that Waterloo was to come yet. They said the lad submitted very doucely to't; and he was soon

working at the mill as steadily as if he had never been out of the sound of clap and happer. He was gey often up at the Haughead, too, by all accounts; and it seemed as if things were flourishing there again, for bonnie Bell Johnstone's cheeks began to get back their roses and her lips their smiles, though they were o' a different kind from formerly—more soft and sweet, but less pawkie and merry than they used to be.

"Allan was much thought o' in the country side, for he had been in many battles, and had been wounded more than once, though he was spared to come home without stumping on a stick leg or wanting an arm. Besides, he had seen many outlandish things in the countries he had been in that none of the folk about us had ever heard o' before. And then his description of the papish worship and images, with wax candles burning before them even in the daylight—set up these idolaters for wasters! and the incense, and the priests, and the dirty shaven monks, and the singing bairns with long white sarks on the outside of their claes, in the muckle dark kirks with painted windows that turned the Creator's blessed light

into all manner o' colours—oh, Mr. Matthew, but it was just awful to listen to't! No wonder, everybody thought, that the land was so scourged by God's judgments in the way of fire and sword for its idolatries. But we all liked to hear about them notwithstanding, and thought much of the man that had seen such extraordinary sights. Even the minister had him up to the manse to question him on his adventures in Spain.

"And ere long there was a blithe wedding at the Haughead, and I trow a bonnier bride than Bell Johnstone never stepped over her husband's doorstane. There were twenty riders at it, and many of them had their wives or sweethearts riding on a pillion behind them. I was glad to see Jock Elliot had brought little Katie Gourlay on his brown mare, for nobody knew till then that Jock was seriously courting her, though we all suspected her feelings for him. The rest of the folk came in carts and caravans, except them that were near neighbours, such as the minister and his wife, and the doctor and his old maiden sister.

"And Bell had a good providing; Gavin Johnstone didna grudge to his only daughter, for she

had the best braws of any bride of that time in the country side. And, well-a-wat! she was the mistress of a grand plenished house at the mill, well stocked with both napery and blankets; for Allan's mother had been an active woman, and had left everything routhy (abundant) behind her at her death. And it was a bonnie lying place, with a green bank in front, and the clack of the mill was very heartsome.

"I never saw such a wedding dinner as Bell's. There was such a crush of folk that the parlour couldna contain them, and they had to have the dinner in the barn. There were forms for the young folk, and chairs for the bride, the minister and his wife, and the more honourable portion of the company. After the dinner the older and doucer among them went into the house to have a crack between themselves, and afterwards got their tea quietly from the mistress, while her sons looked after the company in the barn.

"John Dempster, who was muckle taken up with his bonnie daughter-in-law, had got a new covered cart painted green outside and white in, to take her home in. Her providing had been sent to the

mill the day before, with her spinning-wheel on the top o't; and her mother charged the miller's man to be sure to drive the bride exactly the same road to prevent ill-luck; but as the man was scarcely sober, it's to be hoped Bell's happiness didna depend on his memory. When John and the bride and bridegroom went away in the cart at night, it seemed as if all the old bauchles (worn-out shoes) in the parish had been gathered to fling after them. They papped off Allan's back like hailstones, as, guessing what was waiting him, he made a fell spring from the house-door to the cart. And I couldna help thinking that if the French sodgers had taken as good an aim he wouldna have been alive that day, which would have been a great loss to us all, more especially to Bell.

"Well, Mr. Matthew, Allan made Bell a kind gudeman, and she made him a douce wife. Her trial had sobered her down, and made her more serious-minded. They had a bonnie family in time, though one of the sons—a fine lad, but wilful—was so bewitched with his father's stories of his sodgering life that nothing would keep him from being a sodger himself, which was a great grief to them.

Allan often said it was righteous punishment to him for having left his old father as he had done, and no doubt it was the fruit of that deed. And as to Bell, I jealouse she had many a thought concerning her share in the evil, though she kept them to herself. But the lad did well, and time reconciled them to it.

"The heads of the house are far up in years now —Bell must be six years older than I am—but they were well and hearty when I saw them last, which was only last summer, when I was up Borgie water.

"And that's the end of my Hallowe'en story, Mr. Matthew."

JOHN BEATSON'S HOUSEHOLD.

CHAPTER I.

NO NEWS FROM ANDREW.

ABOUT half a century ago, in the days of small farms and unscientific farming, a humble dwelling, to which belonged a few fields evidently redeemed at some time or other from the adjacent moorland, might have been seen at a short distance by the traveller as he wound his way along the lonely, rough, long road which led to the little post town of Hillhead.

There was nothing attractive about the spot to an ordinary observer, on whom, indeed, it was apt to make a dreary, melancholy impression, causing him to wonder how life passed there, especially in winter, when the snowdrifts were lying deep on the silent moor and the numerous rills that tinkled through the heath and brushwood in the warm season of the year were frozen into stillness. A landscape painter, indeed, might have admired the

dwelling for the dark colour of its walls and roof, relieved on the latter by the green moss which grew in patches on the thatch, over which one old spreading fir-tree, far out of the perpendicular, testifying to the strength of the wind in that locality, stretched some of its branches; for the broken, irregular lines of the low-roofed dwelling and outhouses; and for its background of sloping purple hills and bare moor, blackened with peat hags and sprinkled with ancient grey stones, among which the rude road wound and twisted like a serpent. The lights and shadows, too, were often wonderful in their picturesque effects when the wind blew strongly, as it always did when from the west, and the blue sky had masses of white clouds driving along it, now obscuring the sun, and now allowing his beams to flash suddenly forth, so that the face of the lonely wilderness seemed to laugh. But such days were few compared with those wintry ones I have alluded to, and with those dull, grey, shadowless ones, common to all seasons, when a monotonous, inky hue pervaded the whole landscape, and made it look about the most dreary, depressing scene in existence.

And yet that little solitary, unpretending homestead was, to old John Beatson, its occupant, the dearest and most precious spot on earth; for he and his fathers, for at least three generations, had been born, and had lived and died there as tenants of the Lairds of Turleas.

John's household was a limited one now. He had lost several sons and daughters in their early youth. His sole surviving son had been tempted to accompany neighbours to Canada years before, when John was a hale, strong man, not much beyond middle life, well able to manage the whole labour of his small farm, and his wife the dairy and indoor work. But alas! for the last three years the gudewife had been bedridden; and for some months John himself had been confined during the daytime to his chair by the fireside, owing to a sore in his right leg, which, too long neglected, now refused to heal; and the youngest of their once numerous family, a girl of twenty, was the only active member of the little moorland household.

Margaret was strong and willing. She had managed the dairy ever since her mother's illness,

and she could care for the horse as far as feeding, watering, and removing the stable litter went; but the heavier part of the outdoor work required a man's strength and experience; and no wonder, therefore, that John, good and religious man as he was, felt anxious and depressed as week after week passed on, and found him still as unable as ever to resume his labour.

His lease, too, was nearly expired; and the present Laird of Turleas, wild, improvident, and seldom visiting his property, the rents of which he spent in frequenting racecourses and similar places of excitement, was not likely to have much sympathy for him, long as he and his had been tenants of the family. And for the first time he was behind in his rent, while the term-day was drawing near. It had been always difficult to raise it from the cold, unproductive land; and unless his absent son could help him, of which John was by no means certain, there was no way in which it could be made up. And even if it could, who was to work the farm for the future—at least, till he was better?—concerning which, however, John was now growing despondent. He could not

afford to keep a servant to till his land for him; and though his nearest neighbours had considerately prepared the ground this season for the crops and put them in, he knew that such help could not be long continued. And therefore, in the family worship which he solemnly conducted morning and evening, John was becoming more and more earnest in his supplications that the Lord would cause light to arise out of this darkness, and that they might also learn submission in this their hour of trial.

There were only two to join in his petitions; but each knew in herself what it was to "pray in the Spirit," for John's was a Christian household; and "where two or three are gathered together in My name," says Christ, "there am I in the midst of them."

The house had just a "but" and a "ben" besides the milk-house, separated by the house passage, and each containing two press-beds. John's invalid wife occupied one of those in the "but," or kitchen-place, on account of its greater warmth, and because it enabled her to mix more fully in the family life, and to take some cognizance of

domestic arrangements, which she could still direct, though laid aside from actively engaging in them. From that bed, indeed, she still ruled her house, neither husband nor daughter venturing or desiring to interfere with an authority that all that were brought into contact with instinctively respected.

That bedridden wife and mother was a remarkable woman. She was no ordinary Christian, but deeply taught in Divine things; while her mental gifts and strength of character would have fitted her in a higher station to have taken as prominent a place in the religious history of her times as Scottish women have sometimes been privileged to do. But it was the Lord's will that her life should rather be spent in this solitary moorland district, known to and appreciated only by a few individuals; and she herself was content that it should be so. The "godly woman of Mossend" was the name she was best known by; and people in spiritual distress and perplexity would gladly resort to her for counsel; for her own religious experience had been a singularly varied one, and well fitted her to be the helper of others. She was

as wise in dealing with tender, scrupulous consciences as she was quick in detecting the mere formal professor.

The daughter of such a woman could not but be carefully trained in the fear of the Lord; and Margaret knew that she was the child of many prayers from both parents. Before her illness the mother had had her secret times of retirement in the spence, or "ben" chamber; and the solemn murmur of the voice from within it had often drawn the young girl to its closed door to listen, awe-stricken, to earnest petitions for herself, which had induced her to steal away into the empty byre or some private place, where she would be unheard, to weep over her mother's words, and to pray also. No wonder, therefore, that Margaret had grown up from childhood a thoughtful, serious-minded girl, simple as a child in regard to the ways of the world, and diligently discharging every filial duty in the quiet household.

The male head of the house was come of a good old religious stock in that district, of whom some had suffered persecution, and one had even endured martyrdom for "Christ's Kirk and Covenant" in

the old "killing times," as they are still called in Scotland. John Beatson was proud of his ancestry —prouder than if the blood of our ancient kings had flowed in his veins; for the former were "kings and priests unto God," and the latter were mostly weak and sinful men. He was fond of dwelling on the religious heroism and devotedness of his forefathers, more especially when his auditors were young, with life all before them, and not yet fully decided whether they would (to use John's expression) "serve God or Baal." There was something of the fire and zeal of an ancient prophet about the old man's language at such times; and though all who heard him might not be equally impressed, there were none who were not moved and solemnized for the moment. He and his wife were fitting helpmates for each other; and wise and respected as was the "godly woman of Mossend," in word and deed she humbly obeyed the apostolic injunction to "reverence her husband."

Such were John Beatson and his household.

It was an afternoon in the end of April, only a fortnight to the time his rent was due, that John

sat, silent and abstracted, as was now often the case, by the fireside, his diseased limb supported by a stool in front of his chair. A small round table, of solid old oak, stood at his elbow, on which lay the well-preserved family Bible, which John had been reading sometimes to himself, sometimes aloud to his wife, during the forenoon, while Margaret was busy in the milk-house. John had some books which he dearly prized in the window bole behind him, such as Sheppard's "Parable of the Ten Virgins," the "Fourfold State" of Boston of Ettrick, and similar works by the old Scotch divines full of searching and experimental gospel truths; but in this time of trouble it was only "the Word" itself which could satisfy his soul.

The dinner of potatoes and milk—they could afford themselves no better diet—was over, and Margaret was getting ready for her weekly four-mile walk to Hillhead, to dispose of her butter and eggs at the village shop. She had been up very early that morning to churn; and now her butter was made up and in the basket, each print in its own fresh kale leaf. There was not such a quantity of it as to make it too heavy a burden to carry that

distance for a stout country-girl, for the pasturage on the farm was too poor for the cows to yield much milk. Prices were low in those days also, more especially in so retired a district; but the few shillings, seldom exceeding eight, which Margaret obtained for her butter and eggs, were carefully hoarded to help with the rent, save what she deducted from them to purchase the indispensable tea and sugar for her mother, whose feeble appetite refused the porridge and milk, which was the family meal, morning and evening. And yet, alas! notwithstanding all Margaret's savings and self-denials —for a pedlar's box had attractions even for a maiden of her staid and sober spirits—twenty pounds were yet lacking of the rent of fifty.

"It's three months now since I wrote to Andrew," said the old man at last, raising his head and turning it in the direction of his wife's bed; "just before this trouble settled down on my leg, Marion, and yet there's no answer come from him!"

"There may be reasons for the delay, John," said the sick woman, looking kindly at him, "that we canna even guess at. If Andrew can give us the money, he will; for he was a good and a loving son

to us when he was with us; and if he canna, help will come from some other quarter."

"But where can it come from, Marion?" said her husband, anxiously. "I wouldna be so unbelieving as that lord in Samaria, who said to the prophet, 'If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? I ken that the Lord has the hearts of all men in His hands, and can turn them as He will. But who, amongst all our friends, is either able or willing to lend us that twenty pounds? And even if they did, how could I ever pay them back? It's been hard enough to raise the rent when I was able to work; but now——" and the old man cast a troubled look down on his bandaged limb.

"I have taken our case to the Lord," said his wife, cheerfully, "and this word has been given me in answer: 'Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.'"

"But may it not be the Lord's purpose, Marion," said he, wistfully regarding her, "to remove us and ours from this place? I believe, like you, that the Lord will provide for us, for we have truly tried to

obey His command, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;' and therefore we may plead the promise that is connected with it; but I fear I may have set my heart overmuch on this bit croft of ours. I may have made an idol of it. Indeed, I ken there's no a stane in these walls that isna dear to me, on account o' them that have lived here before us, and served the Lord in their day and generation; and you ken He will not abide idols."

"You have clung to the place, John," reasoned his wife, "because it has been the habitation of the righteous from the day that it's walls were first raised till now; and I canna find in the Bible that the Lord is displeased with those natural feelings which make a man cling to the place of his birth and of his forebears. Barzillai the Gileadite was not reproved for saying to King David, 'Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in my own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother.' I grant that all things look very dark just now, John; but the darkest hour is aye that before the dawn; and the money you need, and the help you need—aye, the

very lease of the farm that you dinna expect to get, may be all ordered in Providence, and will be found ready at the appointed time. Our God is 'very pitiful, and of tender mercy.'"

"Oh, woman, great is thy faith!" murmured her husband to himself. Then addressing his daughter, who just then entered from the milk-house prepared for her journey, attired in buff gingham bonnet, plaid across her shoulders, and feet bare, according to the custom of the Scottish female peasantry of that period, who only wore shoes and stockings to church, and on occasions of festivity.

"Maggie, my dow," he said, "you'll be sure to ask if there's a letter at the post-office?"

"I winna forget, father. How could I?" said Margaret. "And see, father, I've put a creel of peats here close by your chair, so that you can mind the fire without moving your leg. Is the pain troubling you much this afternoon?"

"Nothing to speak of," said the old man, encouragingly. "You've been a gude bairn to us, Maggie," he added, laying his hand tenderly on her head as she knelt down to see that his leg was laid in as easy a position as possible, "and therefore

your days should be long in the land; and maybe, though it disna look like it, they may be spent in this place, too."

Worthy John Beatson! It did not occur to him that Margaret might be willing, some time or other, to leave Mossend for another home.

"I think they will, father," said Margaret, looking thoughtfully down on the floor for some seconds before rising.

"So does your mother; but I havena her faith," said John Beatson, with a sigh.

"Keep up your heart, father," said the girl, with tears standing in her eyes. "Mother, I'll lose no time on the road; I'll be back in good time to mak your cup o' tea."

"No hurry about that, Maggie, my bairn," said the pale, feeble invalid; "and may it please the Lord that you bring good news for your father."

And Margaret, lifting her basket, set forth on her journey, leaving the helpless pair alone in the quiet place. Quiet it always was, for the spongy road near which it lay made even the rumble of a passing vehicle inaudible at the farm; but it was peculiarly so now, when no one was moving within or without

the dwelling. Even the sounds caused by domestic animals about a farmhouse were absent, for the cows and horse were grazing on the pasture land, and the pigs, being recently fed, were slumbering luxuriously in the innermost recesses of their sty. There was no dog either, for none was necessary as a watch in that peaceful, honest neighbourhood, where thieving was a thing unknown, and even the "familiar beggar" took nothing but his willingly-bestowed "awmous," a "gowpenfull" (handful) of oatmeal into his bag. The only break upon the universal silence was the occasional cluck of some motherly hen when her brood were straying too far from her. The stillness was provocative of drowsiness; and John, feeling its approaches, prudently replenished the fire before yielding to them, about an hour after Margaret had left, during which space he had only once or twice exchanged a remark with his wife, and soon after forgot for a while his anxieties in sleep. The aching of his leg often interfered with his night's rest, and his sympathizing wife was glad to see him get this refreshment.

It was a weary, depressing thing to the once

active labouring man, who had been accustomed to be most of the day, and in all weathers, in the open air, this enforced confinement to his chair by the fireside; though he bore it better than those would have done who could not occupy themselves with reading, and who possessed not that religiously-disciplined spirit which in John Beatson subdued any rising tendency to murmur. But still the days were long and wearisome to him, more even than to his wife, whose exclusion from active life was of long duration, and whose bodily strength was much spent. Patience was nearly perfected in her; but John's general health, though affected by the disease in his leg and by want of exercise, was not much enfeebled as yet, and he would often look longingly at that portion of his fields of which the window opposite his chair afforded him a glimpse, wishing he could be again guiding the ploughshare or driving his horse and cart along the breezy moor. But these longings, when they found utterance, were invariably checked by the remark, "The will of the Lord be done."

There were no very near neighbours to Mossend, which was but a kind of outlying pendicle to the

Turleas estate; but some one like-minded with himself, and who respected the old man, would occasionally drop in of an evening to cheer him by conversing on those subjects which, notwithstanding his present distresses, were yet nearest to his heart, and to assist him more comfortably to bed, as walking, even with the help of Margaret and a stick, was exceedingly painful. But the little family were often alone, as the time of their most frequent visitor was not always at his own disposal.

John slept on till within a short time of Margaret's return. He awoke to find the sun declining fast in the west, and the clock about to strike six.

"You've had a fine quiet sleep, gudeman," said his wife, seeing him sit up in his chair to throw some more peats on the fire, which was again getting low. "I was glad that nobody came in to disturb you."

"Ay, it's been a gude rest, Marion, the Lord bethankit for it! for I had seldom more than a dover now and then through last night. Surely it is time now that Maggie should be coming back!"

"It's a long four miles to Hillhead," said his wife, soothingly, "and the greater part o' the road

is either bad or uphill, and she had a full basket to carry. She'll come lighter home, nae doubt; but dinna be over-anxious, John, if she's no here for a while yet."

The old man made no answer. He lay back with his eyes shut, and his hands clasped together. He was evidently praying. So his wife had been for him during the time of his slumber. She was full of pity for him; and though strong in faith herself that the Lord would yet give them a deliverance out of their present pressing trials, she could understand how John, under the dread of getting into debt to his landlord, inability to see how his farm was to be cultivated in the future, and the improbability in these circumstances of his lease being renewed to him—indeed, whether he ought to apply for it—should find his weak and wavering. She also suspected, though John had been silent on the subject, that this delay in answering his letter was giving rise to another anxiety in the father's mind, namely, if all were well with Andrew. Then the long confinement to the house and his compulsory idleness had had a bad effect on his nervous system; his mind was beginning to prey upon itself.

"There's Maggie now; I saw her pass the window," said his wife after a short silence.

John sat up, and looked eagerly towards the door. Any one who had seen how his hands grasped the arms of the chair for support, and who had caught the earnest, fixed expression of his face, would have guessed how overpowering was his anxiety. The door opened, and Margaret entered, not like one who has cheering news to communicate.

"There's no letter yet, father," she said, as she slowly went up to his chair; "but James Amos says, if it comes before I'm back this day week, he'll gie it to the first trusty person that's coming our road."

The old man's grasp relaxed, the eagerness died out of his eyes, and he sank back again in his chair with a heavy sigh, that told how great the disappointment was to him.

"The Lord kens what is best for us," he ejaculated in a low voice.

Margaret hung about his chair for a minute or two, adjusted the pillow on which his leg lay, at times glanced sorrowfully up at his face while thus

employed, but did not attempt to speak to him. She then went over to her mother's bed, and said to her, with somewhat more than the usual colour in her fresh country face, which was not unnoted by the invalid, "Mother, I met Willie Livingstone on the moor, and he bade me tell you and my father that he's coming again the first night he can get awa early, to do anything that's needful about the place."

"He's a kind, gude lad," said her mother; "and your father's aye the better o' seeing him or ahy real friend."

"And James Amos says, mother—and he heard it from the factor—that the laird's coming to Turleas before the term," added Margaret.

And having thus delivered these more than usually important news for their household, the girl hurried away to the spence to divest herself of her plaid and bonnet. She quickly returned, and without sitting down to rest, she began to busy herself with domestic duties. She got her mother's tea ready, and supported her in a sitting posture while she partook of it, for her illness was an affection of the spine, rendering her almost helpless.

She then placed the porridge pan on the fire, and having stirred in the meal till it was well mixed with the water and free from knots, she drew the pan to the side of the hob nearest to her father's chair, that he might give the contents an occasional stir in her absence. She then went to the field to drive home the cows for milking, leading at the same time the staid old horse by a rope halter to his stable.

She milked the cows, and having strained the milk into the dishes that stood clean and ready on the stone shelf in the little dairy, and provided for the wants of all the animals till the next morning, she came back to the kitchen to pour out the porridge for her father's supper and her own into wooden bowls, which, with a jug of new milk, she arranged on the table beside him.

It was a silent supper. Margaret's eyes were full of tears, and she often looked wistfully through them on her father, as if there was something she fain would have said to him, but for some reason or other forebore doing. Both women respected his mood, and did not disturb his reflections by conversing with each other; while Margaret, as

she went about her later evening tasks, which were delayed by her journey, moved with the same softness and caution that persons half-consciously adopt in a house of mourning.

John Beatson chose the twentieth psalm in our Scotch version for singing that evening at family worship; and each felt its appropriateness in the circumstances of the household. They sung it to the plaintive old tune of "Coleshill":—

"Jehovah hear thee in the day
When trouble He doth send;
And let the name of Jacob's God
Thee from all ill defend.
Oh let Him help send from above
Out of His sanctuary," etc.

And then he read from one of the Gospels how the Lord multiplied the few loaves and fishes till they fed a great multitude.

"O Lord!" said the old man, with wrestling earnestness in the prayer which followed, and at which he was unable to kneel, Margaret being the only one of the three worshippers who could, "O Lord! there is nothing too great for Thee. Thou didst feed thousands with five barley loaves and

two small fishes, and we know that Thou art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We are often straitened in ourselves, but never in Thee. Thou canst bring relief to us though we see not the way by which it can come; and Thou canst strengthen and heal this poor diseased body of mine that canna move itself from this chair without help, so as to be able to work for our daily bread again; and, O Lord! Thou canst enable us also to owe no man anything. We have hitherto obeyed this command of Thine; but now it passeth our power, and there is no news from him that we have looked to to help us; and we fear, Lord, that if we fail to pay our debt, it may bring a reproach upon Thy holy name, for we are kent to be Thy people. We have no refuge but Thyself, and we would fain run unto Thee as into a strong tower, that we may be in safety. And, O Lord! Thou knowest how my heart clings to these auld walls: if it be not contrary to Thy will, and there be no needs be in the matter, wilt Thou let me die here in the house where I was born, and where those of ours that have gone before us worshipped and served Thee? Give us favour in the eyes of this

man of Belial, if it please Thee. We would not insist, Lord, we would only humbly plead, if it is good in Thy sight, that Thou wilt regard our petition. Thou knowest what is best for us, and Thou dost not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men."

With many such earnest words did he plead his cause before the throne.

CHAPTER II.

ONE DOOR CLOSED.

TWO days after her last visit to Hillhead Margaret was going actively about her work among the outhouses in the afternoon, when she became aware of a woman who had turned up from the moorland road into the still more rude one which led to the farmhouse. She was attired like the generality of country-women fifty years ago, in a grey duffle cloak, the ample hood of which was drawn over her muslin cap, with its well-starched and full borders; a market-basket was on one arm; and she was standing still at some distance as if unwilling to come farther, and waving with the other to Margaret to approach and speak to her.

"I think it's the Turleas housekeeper," said Margaret to herself, after gazing steadfastly on

the stranger; and throwing down the rake with which she was gathering litter together, she advanced to meet her.

"I thought it was you, Mrs. Rarity," said the girl, as she reached the woman. She had never exchanged words with her till now; but she knew her by sight, having occasionally seen her in the kirk on Sabbaths.

"I have been at Hillhead," said the woman, who was a middle-aged and somewhat stolid-looking individual, "to get some things for the laird, wha's coming to Turleas, it may be the morn or the day after; and James Amos at the post-office gave me this letter for your father; the postage is to stand till you gang there yoursell. They're weary high-priced things, thae letters—I'm glad I get nane o' them."

"Oh, but we willna grudge the postage o' this one," said Margaret, her face beaming at receipt of the long-expected answer from Andrew; "and I'm sure we're greatly obleeged to you, Mrs. Rarity, for bringing it, for my father has been very anxious about this letter—it's from my brother in Canada about some business."

"Ay, James Amos said it was a letter from foreign pairts. I was in his shop getting some groceries, and that's the way I came to get it," said the housekeeper. "Weel, I'm glad I had it in my power to obleege you. And how's the honest man, your father? They tell me he's had a sair time o't with a bad leg."

"Weel, we hope he's mending. The doctor says there would be no fear o' his leg healing if his mind was but easy; and surely it'll be that now that he has got Andrew's letter," said Margaret, with the caution of her nation, for she timely remembered that Mrs. Rarity was the laird's housekeeper, and that the less she said about her father's leg the better.

"I'm glad to hear it," said the woman. "And your mother—I suppose I needna ask if she's in a bettering way?"

Margaret shook her head sadly.

"Ay, ay, e'en sae," said the woman, in her hard unsympathetic tone of voice, showing that her inquiries were the result of curiosity rather than interest; "but you maun have enough to do the now with them baith laid up; though you're a fine

strong lassie, Margaret Beatson. How auld may you be?"

"I was twenty my last birthday," said Margaret, simply. "Will you come in and rest yoursell a bit, Mrs. Rarity?" she added, with careful civility, though she did not particularly like the woman, and was anxious to take the letter to her father without delay.

"I canna do that, lass," said Mrs. Rarity; "it's time I was at hame, for I have the laird's rooms to set in order for him. I wish he would either settle down for a permanency at Turleas, or never come near it at a'; for it's a great fash when your hand's out o' the slaistrie o' fine work to have to begin it again. It's three years come midsummer since he was here last; and if he has the same body servant he had then, he'll be o' nae use in the house but to take up the laird's shaving water and to brush his claes—weary on him! And there's nae flesh meat to be gotten in Hillhead the day, and just the promise o' a new killed jiggot o' mutton the morn's afternoon. There's no a hen at Turleas either, for if I keepit them it would be at my ain cost: you couldna spare

me a pair o' plump young chickens, could you?"

"Ours are ower young to kill," said Margaret, "for the tod (fox) ran off with the last brood we had before them, that would just have suited you. We're ill off for a right place to keep them here at night."

"Weel, that's a pity! I wish the tod had let them alane the now, as I could have taken them hame with me instead o' having to trail to the Riccarton farm for them. It's a lang enough tramp from Turleas to Hillhead and back again, without adding to't. Weel, gude-day t'ye."

"Gude-day, and mony thanks, Mrs. Rarity," responded Margaret, who hurried back to the house as soon as the former had turned herself to continue her journey.

"Father," she cried, running in to the kitchen with the letter in her extended hand, "it's come at last—the letter's come!"

"Thank God!" exclaimed the old man, "then naething can have happened to Andrew. Where's my spectacles?" searching in nervous haste among the articles that lay on the little table beside him.

Margaret found and gave them to him; but his hand so shook with excitement that he could not adjust them to his eyes without her help. He took the letter from her, but presently returned it as if feeling unable to open it.

"Read it out to us, Maggie," he said; "I'm no fit to do it; and we'll a' hear what he says at the same time."

The girl opened the letter, and glanced her eye down the page, remarking as she did so that it was a very short letter for their Andrew to write.

"DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,—

"I would have sooner answered my father's letter that I got in due time, but that I have been laid up with a severe attack of the fever and ague that all strangers settling in this country have to go through, sooner or later. I have got some land of my own now, and clearing it, and working, may be, over-hard has been the cause of it. I am still very weak, but the attacks are wearing off, and I hope soon to be strong again. Everybody has been kind to me.

"Dear father, it is a great distress to me that at present I am unable to send you the money that you say you will need to make up your rent, and which you well deserve at my hands; but money is very scarce in this country, and though the settlers live in plenty, little money passes through their hands, and time is needed to make up such a sum even when a man is in health.

"Dear father, if the laird would but wait for a month or two, as he well may, seeing you and yours have been so long on his ground, I would do everything possible to raise it by then. I hope that my mother is some better, and that you and Maggie are keeping in good health. I will not forget the advice my mother sent me in your letter. This is all I am able for at present, dear father and mother. From your ever grateful and affectionate son,

"ANDREW BEATSON."

"Then that door's closed on us," said the old man, breaking the silence in which all three remained for a short time after the reading of the letter.

"The Lord has mony doors in His providence, John," said his wife, encouragingly; "and the one appointed in this case may be the opening o' the heart of the laird o' Turleas himsell. Out o' the eater may come forth meat."

"It's no likely," said John, shaking his head; "but I suppose I must ask for his forbearance," he continued with a sigh that almost amounted to a groan. "Still, Marion, it feels hard to a man that's aye paid every shilling of his rent down on the term day before: I may be need the humbling, however. But we're in the last year o' the lease

or we will be in a day or twa; and how can I that canna pay my full rent, and am a lamiter besides, ask such a man as the laird o' Turleas for a renewal o't with any likelihood o' its being granted? He has the blood o' persecutors in his veins, and is himsell a mere hardened and ungodly spendthrift; and he will get plenty to take the farm, ill as it is often to make a livelihood off it."

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" asked his wife.

"I ken there isna, Marion; I ken that what's impossible to man is possible with God; but I am just a poor, weak, and often unbelieving man, Marion, and I am aye looking to the lions in the road, and thinking how can they be overcome. Put away the letter in the kist, Maggie, and we will think as little o' the matter as we can till the term day comes. We have really naething to look to now, humanly speaking, but the laird himsell; and looking to him seems like a trusting in Egypt, and a going down to Assyria. I am beginning to think that the Lord will give deliverance only in a way o' making me willing to bear reproach, and even to leave this place; and if sae, why should I

murmur against Him? He kens what is best for me better than I do. Put it awa, my bairn," he added gently; "I kent Andrew would help us if he could—I'm sure he has the will though no the means. Puir lad, I trust he will soon get ower this tout. It's a comfort to me to think, Maggie, that if we have to leave the farm—and I dinna believe your mother and me will be long spared after't—auld trees dinna stand transplanting—that there will be a comfortable hame for you with Andrew, though it's in a foreign land."

"Oh, father, dinna talk like that!" said Margaret, distressed.

"I wouldna say anything to vex you, Maggie," said her father. "'Our times are in His hand'—I'm glad they're no in mine, or they would be a ravelled pirn. Give me out worthy Mr. Thomas Boston's 'Crook in the Lot' from the bole, Maggie; I'll may be get something in it that'll suit me at this pinch. My father used to say that that book was like healing medicine to him once when the Lord had plunged him into the deep waters."

And John, receiving the small volume, rough in type, paper, and binding, from the ready hand of

his daughter, set himself to the study of it for the remainder of the day, occasionally reading some striking passage aloud for his wife's benefit. For instance :—

"This will do for baith of us, Marion," he said. "'The Crook in the Lot' speaks comfort to the afflicted children of God. Whatever is the crook, it is of God's making; and therefore you may look upon it kindly. Since it is your Father has made it for you, question not but there is a favourable design in it towards you. A discreet child welcomes his father's rod, knowing that, being a father, he seeks his benefit thereby; and shall not God's children welcome the crook in their lot, as designed by their Father, who cannot mistake His measures, to work for their good, according to the promise? The truth is, the crook in the lot of a believer, how painful soever it proves, is a part of the discipline of the covenant, the nurture secured to Christ's children by the promise of the Father. Say not that your crook hath been of so long continuance that it will never mend. Put it into the hand of God, who made it, that He may mend it, and wait on Him; and if it be for your good that it should

be mended, it shall be mended; for 'no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.'"

"That's comforting, John," said the long-tried invalid.

"It's a' that, woman!" said her husband. "We'll put it in His hand, Marion, as the book advises, and leave it with Him to mend it as He sees good."

"Amen!" said Marion Beatson.

It really seemed, now that the hope of present help from his son was extinguished, that the restless and anxious spirit manifested more or less by the old man during the past weeks had died out of him also, leaving him patient and acquiescent to whatever the Lord had appointed for him. The very wounds on his leg were so far improved by the change in his feelings, that he suffered less pain than formerly; and the dressing of them became less trying to Margaret, who, though scrupulously attending to the doctor's directions, could scarcely endure to witness her father's agony under the process. And this state of mind and body did not pass off; so that his wife and daughter were led, particularly the former, whose knowledge of

him was greater, to wonder at the Lord's teaching, who was making the once troubled soul of His servant like that of a "weaned child." Sometimes a thought that the Lord might mean them to leave that place, and be giving John the willing heart for it, did cross her mind; but more generally she believed that the Lord, having brought the struggling spirit into acquiescence with His will, would also give the temporal blessings so earnestly prayed for.

"Wha is that you were speaking to, Maggie?" John Beatson asked of his daughter early on the Monday evening, four days after the receipt of the letter, on her return to the kitchen; his ear having caught some murmur of a conversation without.

"It's Willie Livingstone, father," said Margaret, stooping her head over the table she was wiping, so as to conceal her face from observation; though, as the young man was a frequent visitor at the farm, there seemed no reason why she should hesitate to name him this evening more than any other.

"Oh, it's Willie Livingstone, is it?" said her father.

"Yes, father," said Margaret; "you mind I told you I had met him on the moor the last time I was at Hillhead, and that he had sent word he was coming to help us the first night he could get away early from Tuthope. He's threshing out some o' the last stack o' corn."

Margaret did not think it needful to explain that it was from no chance that Willie Livingstone had driven his master's horse and cart along the moor at the same hour at which she was returning from Hillhead, nor what else he had said at that interview—she left that for the young man to do.

"I dinna mind o't, Maggie," said her father; "but it's a gude turn he's doing us. I was just thinking o' that corn last night, and wondering how it was to be got ready for the mill, for I daur say your meal-barrel is getting low."

"I mind Maggie mentioning it," said the mother. "Maggie, my bairn, you'll see to bring him in to his supper when he's got through wi't; and put down a piece o' cheese and some cakes on the table, as well as the parritch and milk."

"Yes, mother; he said he was coming in to see

my father," said the girl, without turning round while speaking.

"I'll be glad to see him," said John; "naebody has been sae kind as that lad, though all have been neeborly and helpful since I was laid up. It was him, Maggie, wasna it, that ploughed the back park instead o' gaun to the fair when his maister had given him a holiday? It's a grand thing to see the young sae considerate."

"He's a weel-disposed lad," said the mother, whose eyes had been following Margaret's movements about the kitchen, "and I think there's the root o' the matter in him."

"And he's come o' a gude stock besides," said the old man, musingly. "The Livingstones o' this parish were marked men in the auld days; and though he's the only ane left o' them, here at least, from a' that I hear o' him or have seen o' him mysell, I would say he's a goodly shoot o' the auld tree."

"Come awa, Willie," said the old man, in a kindly tone, as Willie Livingstone, a tall, fine-looking young man, whose appearance testified to the excellent physical qualities also of the stock

he sprang from, showed himself at the kitchen-door when his labours in the barn were over; "sit ye down, sit ye down, sit ye down, lad," pointing to a chair at the other side of the fireplace; "one doesna see a friend like you every night."

"I wish I could do mair," said the young man, heartily; "but you ken my time doesna belong to me, and I can only come to do a turn like this when it suits my master; and we've been very busy for the last week. I have threshed out about half a boll, I think," he added. "Maggie here can easily put it through the fanners, and fill the sack. I'll be going to the mill with some of our ain corn this week, and I'll call for yours as I pass the road, and take it wi' me."

"Ay, lad, it'll be a great kindness," said John; "and the Lord reward you for it, and for all else that you have done."

"And how are you and the mistress keeping, gudeman?" said the visitor, looking from the invalid at the fireside to the more feeble, wasted one in bed, with an expression of much interes'

"No very weel as to body, Willie, either o' us; but she kens what it is to be patient under the

Almighty's hand, and I trust I am learning the lesson. Weel, I am glad to see ye, lad, for you as weel as me are come o' a godly ancestry, who preferred the misty hillside, and the dens and caves o' the earth, to soft beds, and pleasant meat, and warm firesides with an ill conscience. It was a dark time then in poor auld Scotland, Willie; but it's to their sufferings in the cause o' religious and civil liberty that we owe it that we, their bairns, can sit peacefully under our vine and fig-tree, no man making us afraid."

John's vine and fig-tree were essentially figurative in his cold, northern land; and in his case were represented only by the great spreading fir that stretched some of its crooked branches over his humble roof.

"Godly Alexander Semple," continued the old man, warming with his subject, and having found, as he thought, a congenial listener, "used to say o' ane o' your forebears, that his hand was as steady on the Gospel plough as it was when he leant a' his weight on a lea-furrow. They say you're a gude ploughman yoursell, Willie, and can make as straight a furrow as any in the parish; and I hope

that the Lord, by His grace, will give you as gude a grip o' the other as ever Hugh Livingstone, your forebear, had."

"I hope He may, gudeman," said the young man, modestly, "though I'm no likely to be tried as he was."

"Wha can tell, Willie? God calls for witnesses in every generation: if no to testify for Him to death and imprisonment and spoiling o' goods like our forebears, still to what's trying enough to flesh and blood—to strife o' tongues, it may be, or to opposition o' ungodly men, for we are assured that 'all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.' And if we havena these outward things to humble and keep us low, we may have to wrestle sair with the old Adam within us, till we have often, like Paul, to cry out, 'Oh wretched man that I am!' I have had my share o' the last, and now the Lord sees need to humble me by outward dispensations. He has tied me down here to this chair, and has made my nights and days heavy wi' pain and weariness—me that scarcely kent what a sair head was till this trouble came upon me, and little likelihood, as far as I can see, o' my being brought out o't, Willie, and able to work on the farm

again. And then, I'm behind with my rent—I dinna mind telling you o't, Willie; it will be kent by a' the parish soon—and my lease is just about out, and no like to be renewed in the circumstances. And yet, Willie," said the old man, with a kindling eye, "I hope I have been taught to say, like him that was far heavier tried than me, 'Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil?' We need chastening ilk ane o' us. He has keepit me and mine in health and peace for many a year, and shame on us if we canna trust Him in the days o' darkness and trial."

"I hope things may turn out better than you expect," said the young man, glancing at Margaret, who, on his entering, had sat down almost behind her father's chair, though it was time to set about preparing the supper. Her eyes met his, and then, as if moved by a sudden impulse, she rose hastily and retired to the spence. "It was about these very things, gudeman, that I wanted to speak to you and the gudewife the night, if it winna weary her," continued Willie Livingstone.

"Speak out whatever you have to say, Willie," said the sick woman, quietly.

"Weel, it's just this—ye'll excuse me if I dinna put it into the very best words; I'm no great speaker. I think, gudeman, I can show you a way of getting out o' your difficulties."

"Ay, ay, Willie?" said the old man, wonderingly.

"You want twenty pounds, I understand, to make up your rent," said the young man; "and you want a man to do the work of the farm——"

"But I canna afford to pay him, lad," said John, interrupting him.

"The man I'm thinking o' doesna look for wages," said Willie Livingstone, to the old man's astonishment. "I'll make it all plain to you in another minute. You see I have had my eye on your Maggie, who's a bonnie, sensible, well-dispositioned lassie, for mair than a year, and coming to see her gey often—may be you guessed my errand?" said the young man, appealing respectfully to the mother, who signified by a look that she had; "but I never spoke directly to her on the subject till some weeks back; and I only got her answer the day she was last at Hillhead, when I timed my crossing the moor so as to meet her on the home-coming. I told her then what I

thought of doing, if she was agreeable and her father and mother didna object. I have upwards o' twenty pounds o' savings," he continued, his voice gaining in firmness as he proceeded. "You ken I have had only mysell to think o', and I have been aye looking forward to the time when I might have enough gathered to take a small farm. But now, gudeman, I think the best way o' disposing o' these twenty pounds—they'll be nearer thirty when I get my wages—will be to make up what you're due to the laird; and I am weel able to do the work o' the farm, as you ken. And if you have nae objections, Maggie and me propose marrying, and managing the farm for you. I have often felt the want of having nae friends o' my ain, and of such a quiet fireside as yours to sit down at when my work was ower. I mayna get free till the winter term; but I'm no without hope that my master, who's no hard to deal wi', will let me off now, especially as I ken o' a lad in the next parish, as gude a ploughman as ony hereabouts, who's thrown out o' a situation by his master's death, and will be glad to take my place. And that's just a', gudeman."

"Are you really in earnest, lad?" said John, who had listened to the young man's words like one in a dream.

"'Deed am I," said Willie Livingstone, eagerly.

"Marion, speak you," said the old man, appealing to his wife. "I would do it, but I canna."

"It's just the Lord's door opened to us at last, John," said she, with tears in her eyes, and a smile quivering over her pale face. "I knew it would be, sooner or later, though by what means I couldna tell. Willie Livingstone, bid Maggie—she's in the spence—to come but here to me."

The young man speedily returned with Margaret, and both stood in front of the bed. Though not possessing so striking a figure as her lover's, Margaret Beatson was yet a fair specimen of Scottish girls of her class. She was of middle height, strongly but, as yet, not heavily made; and her neatly-fitting short gown and apron, the upturned sleeves of the former showing her red, plump arms, set off her well-developed bust and trim waist to advantage. She had an abundance of fair hair, with a ripple running through it, and though none of her features were good, her face

was fresh-coloured, and altogether pleasant to look at.

The mother took a hand of each as they stood thus beside her, and clasped them together.

"God bless you, my bairns," she said, in low, earnest tones; "and in your married life may you 'walk together as heirs of the grace of God!' I ken I can trust you with her, Willie."

"I am sure you may, mistress," said the young man, while Margaret sought refuge for her bashfulness by slipping away to prepare their supper.

"And I hope, gudeman, that you have nae objections either," said Willie Livingstone, turning to him.

"Nae objections, Willie! nae objections!" murmured the old man in a voice of deep feeling, while a tear trickled down his cheek. "How could I? but I am grievously humbled to think that I was sae slow to trust things in the hands o' the Lord. Weel do I mind, Marion, o' your saying to me that the money, and the work, and the very lease might be a' ready, and only waiting for the right time. Bless ye, my bairns, bless

ye! But oh, Willie, lad, are you no taking owei heavy a burden on your shoulders?"

"I'm no feared," said the young man, cheerfully. "Maggie and me are in good health, and fit for our work. And I'm getting mair than I gie—I'm getting not only a wife, but a father and mother, and a home."

"Weel, my gude lad, I trust you will find you havena made a bad bargain," said John Beatson, grasping the young man's hand.

"And wha," said John, after supper, "am I to get to take the rent to the laird, and speak to him about a new lease? Willie, you canna, for it will be ower late to gang to Turleas after your work's by. Gentles never like to be disturbed after their dinner hour."

"I would like Maggie to do it," said the mother, gravely.

"Maggie!" exclaimed the old man. "Surely you canna be thinking o' what you are saying, Marion? Maggie is little mair than a lassie; and then, such a man as the laird ——"

"I have my reasons, John," said his wife; "but I will tell you what they are at another time."

"But will the lassie have courage to go through wi't?" said John, doubtfully, yet aware that his wife never spoke without consideration. "Maggie, my dow, do you think you could gang to Turleas and speak to such a man as the laird?"

"If you and my mother want me to do it," said Margaret, quietly. "I'm no feared, father."

"Sae let it be, then," said John Beatson.

It was a psalm of thanksgiving that John selected for singing at family worship that night, and he sang it with all his heart and soul.

"O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord,
And all that in me is
Be stirred up His holy name
To magnify and bless.
Bless, O my soul, the Lord thy God,
And not forgetful be
Of all His gracious benefits
He hath bestowed on thee.

"All thine iniquities who doth
Most graciously forgive;
Who thy diseases all and pains
Doth heal, and thee relieve.
Who doth redeem thy life, that thou
To death may'st not go down;
Who thee with loving-kindness doth
And tender mercies crown."

CHAPTER III.

MARGARET BEATSON ASKS FOR A RENEWAL OF THE LEASE.

TURLEAS HOUSE was situated at a distance of two miles from John Beatson's farm. The Turleas estate was more extensive than valuable, though the rest of the land was not so poor as Mossend. Its actual rental was fifteen hundred a year; it is double that now; but a heavy mortgage, and the expense of management, though the laird contrived to reduce that as much as possible, made his real income little more than the half of that sum. Two servants only were kept to look after the house and grounds. Mrs. Rarity, who had been housemaid at Turleas during the latter part of his mother's life, and was now a widow without incumbrances, had charge of the house; and a man-servant did the outdoor work, and lived in the lodge, which was a good half-mile from the mansion.

Since his mother's death, fifteen years previous to this period—he lost his father in childhood—the laird of Turleas, though occasionally visiting his estate, had never resided upon it. He was now a man of forty-five, unmarried, and not likely to marry, in the opinion of those who knew him best; his free libertine habits, of many years' continuance, rendering him little suited for the restraints and proprieties of domestic life. And it seemed to give him no concern that if he died, leaving no heir, the estate, which had been in the family for at least three hundred years, would pass to a remote branch of the house, to whose representative he was a stranger. All the laird cared for was to screw as much out of the property, which was strictly entailed, as he possibly could for his own personal enjoyment. His more recent predecessors had been Tories to the backbone, ever ready to hunt out conventicles, and imprison or shoot down Covenanters in the days of the last Stewarts; and in more modern times to give their interest to Government, in return for which they expected to be considered when any suitable Scotch sinecure became vacant. None such had fallen to the share

of the present laird, however; not that he would have objected to hold it, but only because his habits and temperament rendered him somewhat slow and unready in availing himself of opportunities.

The estate was managed by a writer (attorney) in the little town of Hillhead, who visited the mansion-house regularly at the term times to receive the rents from the tenants, besides calling there occasionally to see that the servants did not neglect their duties. Mrs. Rarity's were light enough; and Duncan Gunn, *factotum* on the place, did no more than keep the garden and grounds in a kind of rough order; but Duncan knew how to propitiate the man of business. Game was not then so valuable as it is now in Scotland, and, of course, was not so carefully preserved. The laird's property, especially the woods near the mansion-house, were overrun by small game; and it was said that Duncan not only kept his own pot boiling —his boys could set traps as well as himself—but made a profit by sometimes privately leaving a plump hare or pair of rabbits at various houses in Hillhead. And as he never failed to remember the writer's larder, and that liberally, that individual

found it advisable to wink at Duncan's faults as far as was prudent.

Margaret Beatson, arrayed in her kirk gown and bonnet, shoes and stockings, in honour of the laird, set off from Mossend on the term forenoon to seek an interview with that individual, and to pay the rent either to him or to the factor. It would be equally incorrect to say that Margaret was agitated at the prospect of this interview, or calmly indifferent to it. Her character, simple and straightforward, prevented her from experiencing the embarrassment which a more worldly wise and self-conscious person would have felt. She was going to perform a duty in place of her father, who was unable to undertake it, with the sanction of both her parents, on whose judgment she was accustomed implicitly to rely.

Margaret had heard that the laird of Turleas was a "bad man;" but this term conveyed only an indefinite idea of his character to the piously-trained and innocent girl. She believed he was irreligious, perhaps a profane swearer and drunkard, besides being the descendant of a godless race who had hunted down and persecuted the "saints of the

Lord;" but she did not look forward to an interview with him with the same shrinking dread and abhorrence as she would have done had she known somewhat more of his life and conversation. For, alas! profane swearing and intemperance were common vices among the gentry of that day—even among those whose morality was of a higher type than that of the laird of Turleas; and Margaret, notwithstanding her retired life, was aware of this. The laird was her father's landlord, of ancient family in that district; and in Scotland, especially amongst the peasantry, this was sufficient to procure him sincere respect and reverence apart from esteem; and Margaret was prepared to give honour where honour was due. She had her apprehensions, however; and as she pursued the road to Turleas, she again and again prayed in her heart "that the Lord would give her favour in the sight of this evil man, and dispose him to grant her father's petition."

On one side of the road the moor extended farther than on the other. John Beatson's farm was its termination on the right hand; but on the left it stretched even to Turleas lodge itself, full of

peat bogs and black pools of standing water in the distance. The lodge was an unpretending structure enough; of a perfectly round shape, with the chimney in the centre of the thatched roof—the whole resembling an old-fashioned kitchen mustard-pot with a sloping lid—affording limited accommodation to Duncan and his family. Ivy plentifully clothed its walls, and somewhat relieved their meanness. An ancient and sorely-mutilated pillar on either side of the avenue sustained between them a gate comparatively modern, for though the painted wood of which it was made was worn and scratched, it was evident that this was owing more to the constant swinging on it of Duncan's children than from the wear and tear of age. It stood open when Margaret reached it; there was no sign of children about, who were probably at this hour in school; and Margaret, who had no acquaintance with Duncan's wife, pursued her way unnoticed down the avenue.

She had often passed the gate on Sabbaths, and had gazed with curiosity down the usually grass-grown and gloomy-looking avenue, bordered with dark fir-woods on either side; but till now her feet

had never trodden it. It was a stately walk to her. Even the entrance to it was magnificent in Margaret's simple eyes, for there was no other to compare it with between Mossend and Hillhead, which was the only journey she ever made, except that to the kirk; and the manse which adjoined it did not possess a lodge, and had only a short gravelled path to its door. It was, however, the sole "genteel" residence with which she was familiar; though, like most of the manses of that period, it was merely an ugly, narrow house, with two windows on each side of the door, four on the next story, and two projecting ones in the roof. But till she saw Turleas House, Margaret had respected it for its architectural merits as well as because it was the abode of the "minister;" and yet the only superiority the laird's house possessed over the manse was its air of antiquity and its greater size.

The older portion of the house of Turleas consisted of a square tower or keep, whose massive walls were pierced with numerous slits or loopholes intended more for the discharge of musketry—perhaps, in an earlier and still ruder age, of arrows

—than for the admittance of light. Some of these had been enlarged and filled with small windows of coarse glass, to suit the necessities of later times; but the lower ones were as strongly grated as a prison house; and a prison house the tower had been on more than one occasion. Its early history was lost in the mists of antiquity; but stories were rife among the peasantry of Covenanters surprised at their midnight meetings for religious worship on the moors by the "Bloody Laird," as he was called, and his wild retainers, and incarcerated in the damp, gloomy dungeons of the old tower till removed from thence to stand their trial before the council at Edinburgh,—if trial it could be called, when men were privately sentenced before their examination, and then tortured to extract information criminating others.

The tower for several generations had been appropriated to kitchen offices and servants' accommodation, ever since an addition had been built, which, though modern compared to the tower, and from its want of the means of defence showing it was reared in a more peaceful age, was yet not less than eighty years old. It was a long, high, narrow strip of a

house, with a steep grey roof, and with numerous irregular windows dotted over its front. A row of small projecting ones, each surmounted by a sharp angle of stone-work, on which were some attempts at ornamentation, broke the line of the slates, and somewhat improved the dull uniformity of the building. High square chimneys rose here and there from the ridge of the roof, as had suited the convenience of the architect rather than his taste, it is to be supposed. The principal entrance was in the middle of this structure, mean and unembellished, except by the coat of arms of the family, which was carved with some appearance of skill on the lintel of the door; and a flight of several steps on either side of a mass of masonry, protected by an iron railing, gave access to the latter. A few creeping plants still clung to a portion of the walls, but would evidently soon disappear from neglect. The avenue and its dismal fir-woods terminated at a short distance from the house, leaving space on either hand for some ornamental trees of considerable age and dimensions; the walk first branching off, however, into a circular sweep inclosing a plot of grass, in the centre of which stood a dial-stone,

"aged and green," marking the slow-passing hours there unregarded by man. The grass plot had once been fine turf, but had become rank and coarse from want of attention, and though now cut and trimmed for the laird, presented as rough and stubbly an appearance as a hayfield after it is mown.

Such was the mansion before which Margaret now stood, deeply impressed with its antiquity and importance. Every object awoke her interest and wonder—from the hoary tower, to whose battlemented top, raised considerably above the modern structure attached to it, the green ivy had almost attained, to the sun-dial which she had often heard of, but whose use she scarcely understood. The solemn stillness in which the place seemed buried created a feeling of deep awe in her mind. Mossend was cheerful compared to it, for travellers passing along the moor were visible from the farmhouse, and there were the movements and sounds of human and other life about it. Here no sound reached her ear save the low soughing of the wind through the trees, or the twittering of those birds among their branches whose nests had escaped being "harried" by Duncan Gunn's boys; and the only visible sign

that the building was inhabited was the smoke, which curled up into the air from some of the chimneys.

Margaret did not presume to approach the chief entrance; but certain that there must be a humbler one for servants and such visitors as herself, probably at the back of the mansion, she passed round the base of the tower, treading as cautiously as if she feared to awaken the slumbering echoes of the place, and discovered, in a small court-yard formed by stables and other outhouses on two sides, and on the third by a wall in which was an open gateway, a low, massive door, studded with nails, and hung on clumsy iron hinges of great antiquity. This door was in the tower, around which the court-yard extended only, the garden lying at the back of the more modern portion of the house. Her too modest knock on the thick oaken door being unresponded to, Margaret ventured to pick up a small stone and use it as a knocker; and presently the door was opened by Mrs. Rarity, who looked somewhat surprised at her visitor.

"Is't you, Margaret Beatson?" she said, scanning the girl from the elevation of a steep step at

the threshold; "and what may you be wanting here, I wonder?"

"I was wishing to see the laird, and to pay my father's rent, if ye please, Mrs. Rarity," said Margaret, humbly.

"Come in, then," said the woman in her usual stolid manner; "folk that bring money are aye welcome, I guess."

And she led the way along a narrow, gloomy passage of roughly-hewn stone, on either side of which were low grim doors, which might be the entrances to vaults or dungeons, up several well-worn steps of a staircase, which evidently ascended to the other floors, and doubtless to the battlements, and which was pervaded by a damp, earthy smell, associated in Margaret's imagination with the parish kirk, and finally ushered her into the kitchen of the mansion, which from its size and vaulted roof was probably the hall of the tower in former days; and, indeed, its only public apartment, shared by the laird and his family with their servants and retainers. It contained a cavernous fireplace, arched over, and wide enough to allow a stone seat to run up each side. A brick elevation, in the middle of

which was an ordinary cooking grate, was now built against the back of the huge chimney; in earlier times the fire was upon the hearth-stone. A leg of mutton, suspended by a string from a hook in the centre of the arch, was revolving before the fire for the laird's dinner. The roof and walls of this apartment had been whitewashed some time within the last twenty years, probably before the demise of the last "leddy;" but had now lapsed into almost their original stone colour, darkened with smoke. It was lighted by several small windows, but the walls of the tower were so thick, the windows so strongly grated, and the ivy sprays around them so luxuriant, that not much light found entrance; a kind of twilight always reigning there even at noonday. Some clumsy, old-fashioned kitchen furniture, and Mrs. Rarity's spinning-wheel, were all that it contained.

"You had better take a seat, Margaret Beatson, till I let the laird ken you are here. You're a young lassie to be sent on business to him, I think," said the housekeeper; "but you ken your ways best, you very gude folk."

She went away through a door at the lower end

of the kitchen, leaving Margaret for a few moments uncomfortable by the taunt; but soon returned, saying, as she sat down on one of the stone seats to baste the mutton,—

"You'll have to wait awhile, Margaret Beatson. The laird's busy with the factor; but you're to gang into the parlour when the bell rings.

Margaret would rather have remained silent till her summons came, for her situation was new and agitating to her; but she feared such conduct would be considered ill-bred by Mrs. Rarity, and therefore she endeavoured to keep up a conversation with that somewhat ungenial companion.

"Are you aye here just by yoursell, Mrs. Rarity, when the laird is from hame?" she asked, timidly.

"Ay, ay, summer and winter," answered the woman. "Na, I have a dowg with me; there he's below the table," nodding her head in that direction.

Margaret had already taken note of the great Newfoundland dog that lay there watching her with his winking eyes.

"Are you no feared to be alone in such a big auld house, and so far from living folk, especially at

night, Mrs. Rarity?" asked Margaret, with a perceptible shiver.

"Hout! What should fear me, lass? I daresay I sleep as sound in my bed in this muckle lonely place as you do in yours, with your father and mother ben the house from ye," said the housekeeper, coolly.

"But they say there's dungeons here, Mrs. Rarity," said Margaret, in a low, awe-struck voice, "and that the wicked auld lairds used to shut up the 'hill-folk' in them till they were amaist like to die of cauld and hunger."

"Ay, and I pass the stairs down to them every night as I gang to my bed," said the housekeeper, with a dry laugh. "The chains they used for them or for others are still hanging to the staples, if you would like to see them—unco sair rusted they are by this time. But that's just the Whiggery o' you folk. I daresay the lairds were neither waur nor better than their neebors lang syne, and the hill-folk, as you ca' them, would have come to nae harm if they had been content to stay at hame and worship as they were bid.

"But you ken they couldna do that, Mrs. Rarity,"

said Margaret, much shocked at the other's latitudinarianism; "it would have been against their conscience."

"Ay, ay," said Mrs. Rarity, with a sneer; "it's weel seen whose daughter ye are—'As the auld cock craws, the young cock learns.'"

This rude remark concerning her parents reduced Margaret to silence, the only way by which she could show her sense of it.

"There was once I got kind of skeared in this house," said the housekeeper, after a pause of some length. "It was a heavy on-ding of snaw that night, and everything was so happed with it outside that one could hear the lightest sound in the house, and considering the thickness of the wa's, out o't too. Weel, there were queer sounds about the house that night; but I had locked my room-door, as I aye do, and I just lay still and listened to them. The very dowg was uneasy, and he did what he never did before or since—jumped into the bed beside me, where he lay trembling and growling as if he couldna make out what disturbed him. But when I opened the house door in the morning, what did I see huddled about it for

warmth, poor things, but a flock o' sheep that maun have wandered down the avenue in the gloaming from Duncan, careless fallow that he is, forgetting to shut the lodge gate! and, of course, it was their moving and baaing, heard through my window in the quietness o' night, that startled baith Ranger and me; but that was the only time. What matters a wheen empty rooms and passages! the pictures o' the auld lairds and leddies can do me nae ill; though I'll warrant, Margaret Beatson, if you were here your lane, you would fancy they were walking up and down the house the haill night, and you would be just ready to die o' fear."

"I dinna ken," said Margaret, with some spirit. "I might be eerie, doubtless—no that I believe in such things as you speak o', but because I have never been accustomed to live alone. But even if such a fancy was to come into my head, I hope I would remember that naething could happen to me without God's permission, and be able to pray to Him to keep me from evil."

"Hech, sirs! that's brave talking," said Mrs. Rarity, with another sneer; "and it's to be hoped

you would walk up to your preaching if you were tried. For me, I'm content at night with the auld prayer that my mother learned me when I was a bairn: 'Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, bless the bed that I lie on;' and I have been keepit from evil as weel as you, I can tell you, Margaret Beatson."

"But oh, Mrs. Rarity, that's praying to saints instead o' to God, as the Papists do!" exclaimed Margaret, unable to comprehend how any one who attended the kirk even occasionally—for Mrs. Rarity was no regular kirk-goer—should be in such a state of ignorance; and, young as she was, fe ling compelled to notice the error. But Mrs. Rarity deeply resented the implied censure; and it was perhaps fortunate for Margaret, who was of a peace-loving disposition, that the angry torrent of words which her remark brought upon her was suddenly arrested by the ringing of the laird's bell. Up the housekeeper bounced, wrath still beaming upon her countenance, giving a vicious twirl to the mutton to keep it turning in her absence.

"Come awa with you, lass," she said, impe-a-

tively, "and dinna keep me waiting. You can let yoursell out by the ha' door when you're done with your business; and if ever you come back here, I trust you'll have a mair civil tongue in your head."

And she conducted Margaret, so fluttered and distressed by the unexpected outburst as to be scarcely fit to meet the laird without some delay to recover herself, through the same door by which she had left the kitchen before, and which had been hollowed through the wall as a communication between the old and new portions of the mansion; then by a long passage into the entrance hall; and opening a door on one side of it, signed rudely to Margaret to enter the room, which she had no sooner done than Mrs. Rarity closed it sharply behind her, leaving Margaret standing just within it, dropping her humble curtsey to the two individuals who occupied the apartment.

They were seated at a table which was covered with papers and the rent-book; a clumsy metal inkstand, that spoke of business, if ever inkstand did, stood in the middle. Margaret knew the writer by sight, though even if she had not, from

the difference in manner and dress, for men did not then dress precisely alike as now, she would have had no difficulty in deciding which was the laird and which the factor. Indeed, had she been in any doubt, she had only to glance up from the former's face at the head of the table, and therefore full in her view, to the portrait of the "Bloody Laird," which hung over the mantelpiece behind him, to recognise him by the family likeness. The living man was the exact counterpart of his ancestor, save that the persecuting laird was accoutred in buff-coat and sword, and his descendant was in broadcloth, ruffled shirt, and unarmed, and that the bold, ruthless expression of the earlier countenance was softened down into sensual indulgence and heartless worldliness in the later. But the men were essentially the same, only born in different times.

"Well, my lass," said the laird, raising his head to gaze at Margaret as she made her modest obeisance, "so you have come to pay your father's rent?"

"Yes, please, your honour, as he's no weel enough at present to come himsell," said the girl, quietly,

though her voice trembled a little; "and to ask a favour of your honour," she added.

"Well, hand the money to Mr. Pettigrew here, and he will count it and give you a receipt," said the laird.

And Margaret advanced and consigned her father's ancient mole-skin purse, which had held many rents, to the factor, and then stepped back a few paces from the table.

"And the favour, my bonny woman—what is it?" asked the laird, regarding the fresh-coloured, comely young girl before him with some interest. "Don't lose time, for this is a busy day."

"It's about the lease, your honour. My father hopes your honour is willing to renew it, for he would like ill to leave the farm where he and his have been sae lang," said Margaret, breathlessly.

"Humph!" exclaimed the laird, evidently unmoved by the appeal. "How can your father expect me to give him a new lease when, if it's all true that I hear, he will never be able to work again—and he has no son here, I understand, to fill his place?"

"I hope my father will soon be fit for work

himsell, sir," said Margaret, with courage; "and if no, there's one that'll manage the farm as weel as he has done."

"And who may that be, my lass?" said the laird, who knew that a cotter farmer like John Beatson could not afford to hire a ploughman.

"It's Willie Livingstone, who's in service at Tuthope the now," said Margaret, colouring and dropping her eyes; "but him and me are to be married, and live at Mossend with my father and mother."

"A-ha! that's to be the arrangement, is it?" said the laird, with a rude smile at the girl's embarrassment.

He turned his eyes inquiringly on the factor, who answered to the look,—

"I know who the young man is, laird. He's steady, undoubtedly, and one of the best farm-servants in the parish."

"Ay, ay?" said the laird, as if considering.

"And my mother bade me say to your honour that she was the daughter of Ronald Macalister, of Hartburn Mill, whom your honour would mind o' lang syne," said Margaret.

"Ronald Macalister! What does the woman mean by that?" exclaimed the laird, in an irritated tone. Then, as if a sudden recollection had broke upon him, "What!" he said; "not Ronald Macalister who fished me out of the deepest pool in the Hartburn water when I was a boy, and had played the truant to my mother and tutor—you don't mean him?"

"It's the same, your honour," said Margaret, her hopes rising as she heard the laird acknowledge the obligation

"And so John Beatson's wife is Ronald Macalister's daughter: and you are his granddaughter, of course?" said the laird, after a pause.

"Yes, your honour."

"I never knew it before," said the laird; "but I was sent away to school soon after that accident, and I suppose I had forgot all about old Ronald when I came home. No doubt but for him, Pettigrew—and they say he ran some risk in saving me—I would be lying in my coffin in the family vault to-day instead of sitting here. I suppose they must have the lease, Pettigrew. You're sure, my girl, you are not hoaxing us about this marriage of yours?"

Margaret coloured more deeply than even before, and with something like indignation in her voice she answered, "Please, your honour, I wouldna tell a lee to win a' the lands o' Turleas."

The laird only laughed; then turning to the factor, who had by this time counted Margaret's money, and had handed the receipt and empty purse to her, "Whenever you have leisure, Pettigrew, before I leave Turleas," he said, "make out a nineteen years' lease to old Beatson at the same rent. I suppose the ground won't afford raising it?" (The factor shook his head significantly.) "Well, then, let it be the same. Of course, you will make inquiries into the facts of this marriage affair first; it must depend upon that. And here, my girl," he said, motioning to Margaret to approach him: he put two gold pieces into her hand, adding, "these are to buy your wedding gown, because you are Ronald Macalister's granddaughter. Good day to you, my woman; the lease will certainly be sent to your father, if all's right."

"Many thanks to your honour!" exclaimed Margaret; and dropping her curtsey, she left the room; and glad to escape returning through Mrs.

Rarity's kitchen, obeyed her injunction by leaving the house by the hall door.

The years of that new lease were years full of hard toil, but also full of peace and content to John Beatson's household. The rent was never again in arrear, for Andrew throve on his Canadian farm, and was liberal of help to those struggling with an unkindly soil at home. The "godly woman of Mossend" survived till after the birth of her first grandchild; and oh! how that feeble, helpless invalid was missed and mourned by many besides her own family in the moorland farm! But John, like Hezekiah, had his life prolonged for fifteen years, though never fully recovering his former strength; and at the close of them died full of days and honour beneath his forefathers' roof-tree, the Lord graciously granting His servant's petition.

A new laird, energetic and skilled in agriculture, had now succeeded to Turleas, and improvement was the order of the day. Small holdings were to be abolished when their leases expired; and therefore, at the close of the nineteen years, Willie

Livingstone and his wife thought it advisable to take the advice of Andrew Beatson, and settle near him in the Canadian woods. And there a little colony has sprung up composed of both families, preserving, it is to be hoped, with the names, the religious earnestness and godly ways of the two races.

In the shadow of the old kirkyard wall at home may be seen a cluster of mossy graves, the head-stones of all but one so sunk and worn by time and weather that the inscriptions are now undecipherable. The remains of saintly men and women lie beneath. The one still legible, though damp and lichens will soon obliterate the names it bears, reads thus, omitting the dates: "Sacred to the memory of John Beatson, tenant at Mossend, in this parish, and of Marion Macalister, his spouse; also to that of their children, Jean, Marion, John, and Ronald, who all died in their youth.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

THE END.

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